



# DIRECTIVES

## Oak Creek Police Department

**Effective Date:**

June 15, 1992

**Reviewed Date:**

June 20, 2019

**Sign-Off Date:**

July 17, 2019

**Title:**

**CITIZEN RIDE-ALONG POLICY**

**Directive Number:**

**3-100**

**Critical Policy**

Yes  No

**Open Record**

Yes  No

**Total Pages:**

3

**Applicability:**

All Employees

### I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The Oak Creek Police Department recognizes the necessity of a policy by which it will manage and regulate its "Citizen Ride-Along Program." The purpose of the policy is to enhance police/community relations; generate a better understanding and encourage a greater degree of openness and trust between police officers and the citizens of the community; raise the level of citizen awareness as to the needs, problems, and operations of its law enforcement officers; and provide the department with the opportunity to gain some insight into how its officers are perceived by the public.

### II. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply for the purpose expressed in this policy:

- A. *Citizen Ride-Along Program:* A limited program by which citizens who are 18 years of age and older may ride along in a squad car with officers who are on duty.
- B. *Hazard Beyond Normal Risk:* The degree of danger for harm presented by a situation that would be considered hazardous even by law enforcement standards.

### III. GENERAL RULES / GUIDELINES

- A. Factors to be considered in permitting ride-alongs are as follows:
  - 1. There is a benefit to the department.
  - 2. There is a demonstrable need by the requester for the ride-along.
  - 3. The ride-along is a resident of Oak Creek.
  - 4. Unless otherwise approved, the ride-along may only ride one time per year.
  - 5. Ride-alongs will generally be limited to 4 hours.
- B. The department recognizes the potential benefits derived from allowing ride-alongs by persons such as, but not limited to, employee family members (no more than once during a 12 month period), elected officials, other law enforcement personnel, judges, district attorneys, city attorneys, law enforcement students, police interns and media personnel.
- C. Riders should not be shielded too carefully from normal law enforcement activities since experiencing them is one of the reasons for the program.

### III. GENERAL RULES / GUIDELINES – *Continued*

- D. Riders should not be directly involved in enforcing the law unless directed to do so by the officer.
- E. Riders are advised that, should they engage in any of the below listed actions after having been warned to desist, at the very least, the ride will be terminated and, at the very most, they could be subject to prosecution:
  - 1. Interfere in the performance of an officer's duty;
  - 2. Attempt to influence an officer's decision;
  - 3. Other actions which are beyond the limits of sound judgment.
- F. If, at any time during the course of the ride, the officer or citizen feels that a particular situation presents a *hazard beyond normal risk*, the officer will terminate the ride. The officer may also terminate the ride if continuing it would threaten the officer's safety or substantially interfere with performance of his/her duties. The officer will have to weigh the law enforcement objective, the danger to the citizen, and the citizen's action toward the situation.
  - 1. When terminating the ride, the officer shall notify the dispatcher and attempt to provide either immediate or alternate transportation to the police station. In the event this cannot be accomplished due to the exigency of the situation, the officer will minimally provide a sheltered or secure area where the rider will be safe, until alternate transportation can be arranged.
- G. Although the mere presence of a citizen rider will alter, impair or interfere with the officer's performance to some degree, unless that interference is substantial, the ride should not be terminated.
- H. Due to changes in patient privacy laws, ride-alongs will not be allowed to observe calls in which medical assistance is requested and an ambulance is dispatched.

### IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Persons 18 years of age and older who wish to participate in the program may address a letter of request to the Chief of Police or his designee. The letter will contain the person's full name, date of birth, address, occupation, when they would be available to ride, why they wish to ride and anything else they wish to say about themselves, including a particular interest in law enforcement. The Chief of Police, or his designee, will review the letter and make assignment of dates. Citizens may also fill out a "Citizen Ride-Along" form and "Release and Indemnity Agreement", available in a paper copy, or apply through the Oak Creek Police Department website and electronically submit their application. This application will be routed to the designee in charge of scheduling ride-alongs. If the citizen applies electronically via the website, they will still need to sign a waiver form when they come in for their ride-along. Persons attending school to attain a degree in Police Science or Criminal Justice and those engaged in formal research will receive preference.
  - 1. Before a citizen is allowed to ride, the Chief of Police or his designee will run a criminal background check and check the in-house and KJIS contacts involving the applicant. The applicant's social media, including Facebook or Instagram, may also be examined for obvious anti-police rhetoric.
  - 2. These checks will be conducted as close to the time of the scheduled ride-along as possible.

#### IV. PROCEDURES – *Continued*

- B. Persons selected will report to the supervisor in charge on the specified date. They will provide identification and complete and sign the "Release and Indemnity Agreement" to include physician, any current medical condition or physical infirmity, and the name of the person to contact in case of emergency.
- C. Since riders will, by their presence, be representing the Police Department, certain rules of appearance will be necessary. Riders will wear clothing suitable for the season and weather conditions. Clothing does not need to be formal (suit and tie) but should be clean and free of any holes, rips or tears. Footwear should be such as to afford a large degree of protection.
- D. The supervisor in charge will review the "Release and Indemnity Agreement" for completeness.
- E. The supervisor in charge will also have to review any investigations or assignments that may be occurring or scheduled to occur which might present a *hazard beyond normal risk*. If this is the case, the supervisor in charge shall make alternate arrangements to provide for the rider or reschedule the rider to return on another day.
- F. The supervisor in charge will brief the rider on the hazards and dangers that could unexpectedly arise and advise him/her that many of the things he/she will see and hear may involve confidential material. The rider will also be advised that he/she could be subpoenaed into court as a result of being witness to a particular incident. The rider will be advised that he/she is to refrain from taking any individual action or attempting to interfere or influence the police officer, and that he/she will, at all times, be under the direction and control of the police officer with whom he/she rides. There will be only one rider per squad and a rider will only be present for each shift.
- G. The officer assigned to a citizen rider will fully acquaint the citizen with the range of police problems and responsibilities. The officer is urged to conduct an orientation tour of the Police Department and the squad car prior to initiating patrol. The officer will be expected to exercise control and have knowledge of where the citizen rider is and what the rider is doing at all times for the duration of the ride. The officer will attempt to expose the citizen rider to as many facets of law enforcement as possible without putting the rider in jeopardy.
- H. Upon completion of the ride, the supervisor in charge will debrief the rider and reinforce the need for confidentiality if an assignment arose that was of a sensitive nature. The citizen rider should also complete the bottom of the release form which asks for opinions and comments regarding the program.

#### V. DISCLAIMER

The Citizen Ride-Along Policy developed by the Oak Creek Police Department is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an officer's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of the Citizen Ride-Along Policy can only be the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.



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Steven J. Anderson  
Chief of Police

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(Attachments)

- *Release and Indemnity Agreement*
- *Citizen Ride-Along Comment Form*