

Ride-Alongs

404.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for a ride-along with members of the Maryland Natural Resources Police. This policy provides the requirements, approval process, hours of operation and member responsibilities for ride-alongs.

404.2 POLICY

Ride-along opportunities will be provided to the members of the public, State employees and members of this agency to observe and experience first-hand various functions of the Maryland Natural Resources Police. The term "ride-along" includes riding as a passenger with an officer on patrol or observing the work day of members engaged in other functions within the Agency such as the Communications Center.

404.3 ELIGIBILITY

A ride-along is available to potential applicants and other interested persons. Efforts will be made to accommodate all interested persons. However, any applicant may be disqualified without cause from participating.

Factors that may be considered in disqualifying an applicant include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Being under 15 years of age
- Prior criminal history
- Pending criminal action
- Pending lawsuit against this agency or the State
- Denial by any supervisor

404.4 REQUESTS TO PARTICIPATE

Generally, ride-along requests will be maintained and scheduled by a supervisor. The applicant will complete and sign a ride-along waiver form (NRP-479, "Liability Release"). If the applicant is under 18 years of age, a parent or guardian must be present to complete the waiver form. Information requested will include a valid state-issued identification card or driver's license number, birth date, address and telephone number.

The supervisor will schedule a date, based on availability. A copy of the NRP-479 will be maintained at the Area offices.

If the request is denied, a representative of this agency will advise the applicant of the denial.

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404.5 PROCEDURES

Once approved, ride-along applicants will be allowed to participate no more than once every six months. An exception may apply to the following law enforcement-involved participants:

- Volunteers
- Chaplains
- Maryland Natural Resources Police applicants
- Any others with approval of the Area Commander

An effort will be made to ensure that no more than one member of the public will participate in a ride-along during any given time period. Normally, no more than one ride-along participant will be allowed in agency vehicles at a given time.

404.5.1 OFF-DUTY PARTICIPATION

Off-duty members of this agency or any other law enforcement agency, and employees of the State, will not be permitted to participate in a ride-along with on-duty members of this agency without the express consent of the Area Commander.

In the event that such participation is permitted, the off-duty agency member, other law enforcement agency personnel or State employee shall not:

- (a) Be considered on-duty.
- (b) Represent him/herself as a member of this agency or any other law enforcement agency.
- (c) Participate in any law enforcement activity except as emergency circumstances may require.

404.5.2 CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECK

All ride-along applicants are subject to a criminal history check. The criminal history check may include a DNR records check and a Maryland Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) check prior to approval of the ride-along.

404.5.3 SUITABLE ATTIRE

Any person approved to participate in a ride-along or is required to be suitably dressed in a collared shirt, blouse or jacket, slacks and shoes. Sandals, t-shirts, tank tops, shorts and ripped or torn pants are not permitted. Hats and ball caps will not be worn without the express consent of the agency member involved. The involved agency member or a supervisor may refuse a ride-along to anyone who is not dressed appropriately.

404.6 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The assigned agency member shall consider the safety of the ride-along participant at all times. The member shall maintain control over the participant and shall instruct the individual about the conditions that necessarily limit his/her participation. Instructions should include:

- (a) The participant will follow the directions of the agency member.

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- (b) The participant will not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects, reading an individual's criminal history or other protected information, or handling any police agency equipment.
- (c) Participation may be terminated at any time by the agency member if the participant interferes with the performance of the member's duties.
 - 1. If the participant is on a ride-along, the member may return the participant to the point the ride originated.
- (d) Participants may be allowed to continue a ride-along during the transportation and booking process, provided it does not jeopardize their safety.
- (e) Members will not allow participants to be present in any location or situation that would jeopardize the participant's safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other member of the public.
- (f) Participants, including civilians, volunteers and Reserve Officers who are not sworn law enforcement officers or NRP Cadets shall not be permitted to accompany the agency member into a private residence, or onto private property, without the express consent of the resident or other authorized person, except where exigent life-saving circumstances exist.

The member assigned to provide a ride-along shall advise the police communications operators that a ride-along participant is present in the vehicle before going into service. An officer with a ride-along participant should use sound discretion when encountering a potentially dangerous situation, such as a high speed pursuit, and if feasible, let the participant out of the vehicle in a well-lit public place. The police communications operators will be advised of the situation and as soon as practicable have another agency member respond to pick up the participant at that location. The ride-along may be continued or terminated at this time.

Conduct by a person participating in a ride-along that results in termination of the ride, or is otherwise inappropriate, should be immediately reported to a supervisor. The member should enter comments regarding the reasons for terminating the ride-along on the waiver form.

Upon completion of the ride-along, the member shall return the waiver form to the supervisor.