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OPERATIONS MANUAL

STANDARD INSTRUCTION 06, SECTION 12

STATION MANAGEMENT: RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM

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**I. PURPOSE**

Ride-Along programs provide participants an opportunity to observe Fire-Rescue and EMS personnel perform their duties. This perspective is a valuable tool for the citizens we serve to better understand the functions of the Fire Service. Ride-Along Programs also offer students pursuing, or planning to pursue, an occupation in the fire protection or EMS fields an opportunity to observe and in some cases function as a Firefighter or Paramedic.

**II. SCOPE**

This policy shall apply to all SDFD Personnel and Ride-Along Program participants.

**III. AUTHORITY**

The Fire Chief authorizes the information within this policy.

**IV. POLICY**

**A. Restrictions**

1. Ride-Along Program participants shall not accompany Fire-Rescue or EMS personnel onto private property if the property owner objects.  
  
(This rule will not apply to EMS Division Ride-Along Program participants whose participation in the Ride-Along Program has been approved by the Fire-Rescue Department and in agreement with an approved Training Center. See subsection, IV, D, 1, b, of this same Standard Instruction)
2. Ride-Along Program participants under the age of 18, with the exception of certified SDFD Cadets, or anyone considered a minor may not Ride-Along on SDFD units without a parent or guardian present during the entire Ride-Along.
  - a. The parent or guardian may not be part of the working crew.
  - b. Required waiver forms shall be signed by a Ride-Along Program participant's parent or guardian.
3. Any member of the media that has been approved to participate in the Ride-Along Program shall be provided direction by the Company Officer and/or Media Services Manager (PIO) on acceptable filming or taping of emergency incidents prior to the Ride-Along taking place.

**B. Common Program Participants (Examples)**

1. SDFD Cadets
2. Fire Science students
3. Mobile Intensive Care Nurses (MICNs)
4. Physicians & Nurses
5. Students enrolled in EMS programs
6. Medical Professionals

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7. The General Public, with approval from a Battalion Chief, Deputy Fire Chief/Director, Assistant Fire Chief, Fire Chief or Media Services Manager.

C. Rules

1. SDFD Cadets are authorized to Ride-Along for 24 hour shifts. Any other participants in the Ride-Along Program will only be authorized to ride between the hours of 0800-2000. Exceptions may be made by the Fire Chief or his/her designee. For example, EMS students or interns assigned to night staffed ambulances or 24 hour units may work past the 20:00 hour designator.
2. General public Ride-Along Program participation is limited to one Ride-Along per rolling year. The Fire Chief, or his/her designee, may grant exceptions to this policy.
3. Mandatory Attire and Grooming
  - a. Students and Interns
    - 1) Closed toed shoes
    - 2) Long hair must be restrained and secured away from the face
    - 3) Jewelry is discouraged but wedding rings, watches and plain studded earrings are permitted
    - 4) No nose rings, lip rings or other facial hardware
    - 5) Strong perfume or aftershave is offensive to some people and shall not be worn during a ride-along
    - 6) Personal appearance, grooming and hygiene must be professional
    - 7) An agency or student ID or nametag must be worn in a visible location at all times; even if the person riding along is wearing a shirt with school logo and name (for example)
  - b. The General Public
    - 1) Neat and presentable attire
    - 2) Closed toe shoes.
    - 3) Pants (no skirts or dresses), polo shirts or button-up shirts.
    - 4) Hair styles, make-up, jewelry and perfume are to be minimal and in good taste.
    - 5) Must wear a SDFD Official Ride-Along Program identification tag in a visible location at all times. The identification tags will be available at all stations.
4. The use of tobacco products is to be consistent with Fire-Rescue Department policy while participating in the Ride-Along Program.
5. Ride-Along Program participants shall remain in the fire apparatus or ambulance at any emergency scene unless specifically permitted to leave by a Fire-Rescue Department Company Officer or Supervisor.

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6. Ride-Along Program participants shall not enter any hospital Emergency Department unless accompanied by Fire-Rescue Department personnel or given permission to enter by hospital personnel.
7. No Ride-Along Program participants may video record, photograph, sound record, post on social media, or otherwise communicate any information obtained during the Ride-Along without the prior permission of the Fire Chief, the Fire Chief's designee, or the Fire-Rescue Department's Media Services Manager.
  - a. Ride-Along Programs participants must allow the Fire-Rescue Department a chance to review the material prior to its publication if requested.
8. Ride-Along Program participants shall not use, handle or operate any Fire-Rescue Department equipment unless approved to do so by the Company Officer or Supervisor.
9. Ride-Along Program participants shall not interfere in any way with Fire-Rescue Department operations.
10. Ride-Along Program participants shall not provide information to the media regarding emergency operations or patient information unless authorized to do so by the Fire-Rescue Department Media Services Manager.
11. Ride-Along Program participants shall behave in a responsible and professional manner during the entire course of their Ride-Along.
12. Ride-Along Program participants are to be seat belted at all times when the fire apparatus or ambulance is in motion.
13. Any document identified in subsection IV, E of this Standard Instruction shall be signed prior to riding on any SDFD fire apparatus or ambulance.
14. Failure to abide by any of the rules in this section may be grounds for denial of or termination of the Ride-Along. The Company Officer or Supervisor is granted the discretion to terminate a Ride-Along at any time.
15. This policy shall not apply to school tours or similar types of community events in which participants may be riding on any Fire-Rescue Department apparatus. Under no circumstances shall Fire-Rescue Department units respond to an emergency incident with event participants onboard unless the proper documentation has been signed before hand.

D. Authorization

1. **Authorization to participate in the SDFD Ride-Along Program must come from at least the Battalion Chief (BC) level.**
  - a. Operations Division or Fire Prevention Bureau ride-along authorization (non-EMS/Ambulance & College Fire Technology Program)
    - 1) Requests for Ride-Along authorization shall be forwarded through the chain-of-command to the appropriate Battalion Chief or Fire Marshal/Assistant Fire Marshal.

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- 2) If approved by the Battalion Chief or Fire Marshal/Assistant Fire Marshal, an entry shall be made on the Battalion calendar (Operations Division) to include the Ride-Along Program participant's name and contact information.
- b. EMS/Ambulance ride-along authorization
- 1) Requests for an EMS program student Ride-Along will only be processed if the request is from an EMS Division approved educational institution.
  - 2) Ride-Along Program participant requests will be forwarded through the chain-of-command and processed, approved and scheduled by the EMS Battalion Chief or Program Manager.
  - 3) Individual requests for a Ride-Along from EMS program students to SDFD personnel shall be referred back to the student's educational institution for proper routing.
  - 4) All requests for a ride-along shall be made through [sdfd\\_ridealongs@sandiego.gov](mailto:sdfd_ridealongs@sandiego.gov)
  - 5) Authorized Ride-Along dates will be posted on the SDFD EMS calendar.
  - 6) EMS educational institution sponsored students shall only provide medical care commensurate with their training levels and under close supervision of the Company Officer or Supervisor.
  - 7) Paramedic internships
    - a) Paramedic interns approved and assigned on a SDFD ambulance, shall only perform ALS skills during their internships.
    - b) Paramedic students (not yet assigned to or in an internship) shall only engage in patient assessments and not be allowed to perform patient care skills.
    - c) All students and interns shall remain under the close supervision of the Company Officer, Supervisor, Paramedic Preceptor or Secondary Preceptor.
    - d) Students or Interns shall not be unattended with any patient in the back of an ambulance. The Preceptor shall be responsible for the direct observation of the intern or Student.
  - 8) If the Paramedic Preceptor or Secondary Preceptor is not assigned to the paramedic unit, the Paramedic intern shall be removed from the ambulance or assume the role of observer only.
  - 9) There shall be only one (1) Ride-Along Program participant per ambulance (the exception to this rule is during an evaluation of the intern by the educational institution).

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- c. Fire Technology Program students
  - 1) Request for fire technology student Ride-Alongs shall be made through the Fire-Rescue Department Public Information Office (PIO).
  - 2) Ride-Alongs will only be approved from accredited colleges or universities that have a signed agreement with the City of San Diego.
  - 3) Individual requests for a Ride-Along from fire technology program students to SDFD personnel shall be referred back to the student's educational institution for proper routing.
  - 4) Fire Technology Ride-Along Program participant requests will be forwarded from the PIO office to an Operations Support Captain and then to the appropriate Battalion Chief.
  - 5) Fire Technology Ride-Along dates will be posted on the appropriate battalion calendar.
  - 6) Fire Technology college students will not participate in any hazardous activities and may only participate in non-hazardous activities as approved by the Company Officer.
  
- d. Cadet Program Ride-Along authorization
  - 1) The Battalion Chief of Training, Training Officer, is responsible for the Cadet Program.
    - a) Cadet Program Ride-Along participant requests will be processed and approved by the Training Officer or their designee (i.e. the Cadet Program Manager). The notification will then forwarded through the chain of command to appropriate Battalion Chief.
    - b) Upon the approval of the Operations Battalion Chief, the ride-along participant will be added to the SDFD Training calendar and the Battalion calendar.
  - 2) Authorized Cadet Ride Along dates will be posted on the SDFD Training calendar as well as the Battalion calendar.
  - 3) Cadets will not participate in any hazardous situations and may participate in non-hazardous situations as approved by the Company Officer.
  
- e. Community Education
  - 1) Requests may be forwarded to the appropriate Battalion Chief from the PIO or the Community Education section.

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- 2) Requests may be made for a specific fire station or crew by the requestor. The BC of that crew, station or individual will be sent a Ride-Along participation notice from the PIO or Community Education section with the necessary information.
- 3) Requests for Ride-Alongs made by individuals without a specific location or crew will be forward to the Battalions on a rotational basis (Battalion 1, 2, etc...)
- 4) In cases of scheduling conflicts, the PIO or Community Education section shall be notified as soon as possible.

E. Waiver Form and Documentation

1. Ride-Along Program participants, with the exception of SDFD Cadets, shall sign the forms below in advance of riding on any SDFD apparatus or vehicle
  - a. "SDFD Ride-Along Program Confidentiality Agreement" (FD-556); and
  - b. "Waiver of Claims for Damages and Covenant Not to Sue" (FD554).
2. All forms shall be kept in the station files for three (3) years.
3. SDFD Cadet waiver forms and documentation will be handled by the Training Officer and/or the Cadet Program Manager.

F. Company Officer or Supervisor Responsibilities

1. The Company Officer or Supervisor shall be responsible for Ride-Along Program participants at all times.
2. Company Officers and Supervisors shall ensure that all necessary documents are signed and collected in advance of participation in the Ride-Along Program.
3. Company Officers and Supervisors shall ensure that Ride-Along Program participants are signed onto the unit's MDC (if applicable) during the ride-along.
4. Company Officers or Supervisors shall document in the electronic daybook (if applicable) the Ride-Along Program participant's name and contact information.
5. Company Officers and Supervisors are responsible for ensuring that a professional environment is maintained at all times.