

**ESCAMBIA COUNTY FIRE-RESCUE***Rules, Policies, and Guidelines***1000.035****Citizen Ride-Along Program**

Implemented: 5/22/15

Revised:

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Jason Catrambone, Fire Chief**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this policy is to establish a Ride-Along program and the procedures that will govern the program. This program is enacted to allow eligible citizens the opportunity to observe the day-to-day operations of Escambia County Fire Rescue and its personnel; to promote understanding of the duties carried out by those personnel; and to provide an educational experience for those citizens. This policy will provide a standardized process for determining program eligibility.

**OBJECTIVE:**

Escambia County Fire Rescue (ECFR) encourages interested citizens to familiarize themselves with the facilities, equipment, and operations of Escambia County Fire Rescue. This is accomplished by touring station facilities and participating in ECFR's Citizen Ride-Along Program.

Coordination of the Citizen Ride-Along Program will be managed by the ECFR Training Office. (Ride-Along Program Coordinator)

**SCOPE:**

All personnel and any citizen desiring to participate in the ECFR Citizen Ride-Along Program

**ELIGIBILITY:**

Applicants will be required to have a criminal background check completed by ECFR prior to participating. The following acts of conduct may disqualify a citizen from being approved to participate in the program:

1. A citizen, who is the subject of an active criminal investigation or prosecution, or convicted of a felony, shall not be permitted to participate in the program.
2. A citizen, who is the subject of a restraining order for a person or address in or near Escambia County, shall not be permitted to participate in the program.
2. The Fire Chief, or his/her designee, whose decision is final, will evaluate a citizen for participation in the program who has a prior arrest history for a misdemeanor.

Law prohibits denial of the privilege to participate in the program based on race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, disability, marital status, pregnancy, sexual orientation and gender identity, or any characteristic protected by law. ECFR retains the right to deny participation to any citizen for the reasons specified herein and to disclose only such information as may be required by law.

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Jason Catrambone, Fire Chief**PROCEDURE**

Application and Program procedures are as follows:

1. A citizen who wishes to participate in the program must read this policy, complete, and submit the Ride-Along Program Application, Participation Agreement (Release/Waiver Form) and the Ride-Along HIPAA Agreement form. A copy of the applicant's state-issued driver's license or identification card will also be included. Completed forms should be submitted to the ECFR Training Office to initiate the approval process.

Applications must be submitted at least one week prior to your requested ride-along date. Applicants may either mail or bring in the documents to: 6575 North W Street, Pensacola, FL 32505.

2. Each participant must be at least sixteen (16) year of age or older.

3. Upon receipt of the results from the background check, the Ride-Along Program Coordinator will notify the applicant if he/she is approved to be a participant in the program. If approved, the applicant may schedule a ride-along date/time.

4. Only one participant will be permitted per station during a shift. The Ride-Along Program Coordinator may grant exceptions. Those participants who are fire certified, EMT certified, or interested in becoming a firefighter may schedule one ride-along per month.

Those participants who are not fire certified, EMT certified, or not interested in becoming a firefighter are limited to a total of four (4) ride-alongs, no more than one (1) per quarter.

5. Ride-alongs can be scheduled at any ECFR station between the hours of 7:00 am and 9:00 pm, Monday – Saturday, excluding holidays. If unable to participate on these days due to work commitment, exceptions will be discussed on a case-by-case basis.

6. The on-duty Battalion Chief may, at his/her discretion, suspend a scheduled ride-along due to operational circumstances, i.e., riots, storms, disasters, etc.



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## **RIDE-ALONG PARTICIPANT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **A. Dress and Appearance**

1. Ride-Along participant shall be neat and clean in appearance. Their personal hygiene and grooming must be acceptable to the assigned unit officer and Battalion Chief. While participating in the Ride-Along Program, the Ride-Along participant is, in effect, representing Escambia County Fire Rescue.

2. Attire at all times will be long pants, a shirt with a collar or a plain tee shirt (other than white, gray, or red), and if needed, a jacket. No writing or artwork is allowed on clothing, except small brand logos which are acceptable. Riders must wear flat, closed-toe shoes (steel-toe shoes are strongly recommended). Shorts and tank tops are prohibited.

Ride-Along participants shall not dress in a manner that may cause them to be confused with Escambia County Fire Rescue personnel, i.e., blue on blue clothing, blue BDU's etc.

The Battalion Chief or assigned unit officer will make the final decision regarding any questions pertaining to suitability of attire. Ride-Along participants from agencies other than Escambia County Fire Rescue may wear their agency uniform if approved by the Ride-Along Program Coordinator or Battalion Chief.

3. Ride-Along participant shall wear no jewelry, except a ring and a watch are permitted.

4. No visible body piercing (or piercing holes), to include ears (except by females), nose, eyebrows, and tongues. Earrings worn by females should be small posts, no "gauges" or earrings that could interfere with performing assigned duties. Piercing holes larger than those necessary to accommodate a small post earring, must be closed or covered.

5. A department provided identification vest or identification badge shall be worn at all times to identify the person as a Ride-Along. The vest or badge shall be turned in to the assigned unit officer and returned to the company officer's office at the conclusion of the ride.



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## **B. Health and Safety**

1. Ride-Along participant must not become physically or verbally involved in an incident. Under no circumstances will a Ride-Along participant be permitted to enter a building that is or has been on fire until such time as the Incident Commander has declared the fire under control, all smoke has been cleared from the building, and the building has been determined to be safe for entry by non-operational personnel. Fire department personnel shall directly supervise such entry.
2. The possession of firearms is not allowed in any Escambia County Fire Rescue fire station or on any fire apparatus/vehicles.
3. Ride-Along participant may not be under the influence of alcoholic beverages or drugs during a ride-along. The assigned unit officer will not allow the Ride-Along participant to ride along if there is any reason to suspect that the Ride-Along participant is under the influence.
4. Ride-Along participant shall wear a seat belt as per State of Florida Law and ECFR Standard Operating Procedure "Seat Belt Usage."
5. Ride-Along participant shall carry a valid State of Florida or Government Issued Drivers license or identification card with them during the ride along.
6. Per the Escambia County No-Smoking Policy, tobacco usage is only allowed in designated "smoking areas". Per the policy, smoking is not allowed in County facilities or vehicles. Tobacco usage is defined as the use of tobacco in any manner or form.
7. Ride-Along participants are responsible for determining whether they are physically and psychologically healthy enough for a ride-along, and whether they are currently impaired due to illness, injury, medication, or the like. In any case of doubt, the Ride-Along participant should postpone the ride-along activity to another date.



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### **C. Conduct**

1. Ride-Along participants are permitted in the day room, kitchen, truck room and rest rooms only. Offices are off limits unless accompanied by an officer. Bunkrooms (bedrooms) are strictly off limits. Any computer use will be under the supervision of the assigned unit officer.
2. A Ride-Along participant scheduled during mealtimes (breakfast, lunch or dinner) should bring food in for that day or check with the assigned unit officer to inquire about "buy-in" for meals, as food is not provided.
3. Ride-Along participants are expected to stay the whole time they are scheduled unless there is an emergency, at which time the assigned unit officer and the Battalion Chief should be notified.
4. Ride-Along participant will follow directives from officers at all times and are expected to behave in a respectful and courteous manner. Failure to follow the directions of the officers will result in loss of the privilege to participate as a Ride-Along participant.

### **D. Patient Privacy**

1. At no time will Ride-Along participants be permitted to take pictures or use a video camera or any other audio-visual recording device while on the scene of an incident. Requests for media to ride along will be dealt with separately through the Fire Chief and the Escambia County Public Information Office.
2. All Ride-Along participants will treat PHI (private health information) as strictly confidential. The disclosure of PHI outside of the organizations who are working with the patient is strictly forbidden.
3. Ride-Along participants may not take, copy, or transmit response documents with individually identifiable information such as name, address, Social Security Number, photograph, medical history, or other information from which identity can be inferred.



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## **DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES:**

### **A. Battalion Chief**

1. No confidential information will be discussed in the presence of a Ride-Along participant.
2. Assign participant to a unit and include the Ride-Along participant's name and officer to whom he/she is assigned on the duty roster.
3. Determine whether a crew has appropriate qualifications and equipment to take a Ride-Along participant on a ride-along.

### **B. Assigned Unit Officer**

1. Check driver's license/identification card to properly identify Ride-Along participant as the one that is scheduled and provide participant a ride-along vest or badge. This vest or badge should be collected at the end of the ride-along and returned to the officers' office.
2. Advise the Ride-Along participant that the occupant restraint system (seatbelts) must be used at all times while the vehicle is moving.
3. Advise the Ride-Along participant of what will be expected at the scene of an emergency, and that they will not be allowed to become directly involved at the emergency scene.
4. Monitor the Ride-Along participant and ensure that the Ride-Along guidelines are adhered to.
5. Report any problems or concerns to the appropriate Battalion Chief and Ride-Along Program Coordinator. A Ride-Along Follow-up Report will be completed at end of each ride and submitted to the Ride-Along Program Coordinator.
6. The Ride-Along participant is not to participate in any emergency operations or to assist with any operations of fire apparatus (i.e., operating pump, grounds person, etc.).



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7. Safety of the Ride-Along participant should be ensured at all times during emergency operations:

- a. Maintain a safe distance from the emergency scene such that the Ride-Along participants' safety is not compromised.
- b. On a fire scene, the Ride-Along participant should remain with the unit unless otherwise instructed.
- c. On a medical call, the Ride-Along participant should remain at the distance instructed until such time an assessment of the situation is completed and the Ride-Along participant is redirected.

**A Ride-Along participant may do the following activities:**

- Assist in washing units
- Assist in station cleanup within designated areas
- Other duties at the discretion of the assigned unit officer or Battalion Chief
- Any lifting will be limited to less than 20 pounds

**Ride-Along participants will not be given Fire Station door codes for any reason.**