

Germantown Police Department

Policies and Procedures

Number: 1-24
Effective Date: February 19, 2008
Subject: Observer/Ride-Along Policy
Previous Revisions: January 1, 2003

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to provide an opportunity for citizens of the community, City of Germantown employees and others to observe police officers as they perform their duties. Permitting such observations or "Ride-Along" can aid in fostering a better understanding of the mission and role of the Police Department. Providing this opportunity for government officials, community leaders, students involved in criminal justice education programs and others to gain a deeper appreciation for the complexities and difficulties of policing is mutually beneficial. Additionally, this policy will provide guidelines during observation opportunities in order not to unnecessarily expose observers to danger, the City of Germantown to excessive liability, or interfering with the duties of or endangering those officers being observed.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Germantown Police Department to permit limited and controlled ride-along and other duty observation opportunities for citizens, civilian employees and other law enforcement personnel as an educational and/or informational experience.

III. DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES

Police Department employees, not currently commissioned as police officers, may ride as observers with the Uniform Patrol Division upon approval and notification of their supervisor and the on duty uniform patrol supervisor. This includes administrative/clerical staff, dispatcher/jailers, explorers and support staff. The frequency of such ride-alongs will be at the discretion of the employee's supervisor unless otherwise directed through policy.

Germantown Police Department Explorers are authorized to participate in the ride-along program. Specific guidelines are contained in a separate policy.

IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS

Full-time or retired commissioned officers from other agencies or jurisdictions may participate in the ride-along program. The officer or employee must present valid, appropriate credentials establishing their current status as a commissioned or retired law enforcement officer. Members of other agencies participating in the ride-along program will adhere to the policies of the Germantown Police Department as well as the policies of their respective agencies. Full-time or retired commissioned officers may carry their handgun in accordance with T.C.A. 39-17-1350.

Observers currently serving as commissioned officers may wear their regular departmental uniform. Police chaplains will be allowed to ride with on-duty officers under this policy.

V. AUTHORIZATION

Generally, the Chief of Police or designee must approve ride-along or other observation opportunities. Applications will be approved or denied, with or without cause, at the discretion of the Chief of Police or designee.

VI. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Individuals requesting to ride as an observer in the ride-along program must make application to the department for consideration. Persons requesting to ride as an observer in the ride-along program:

- A. Must be twenty-one (21) years of age or older;
- B. Must complete and sign the department's "Release and Waiver of Liability and Indemnity Agreement" form (see Addendum 1);
- C. Must provide acceptable identification (photo I.D. required);
- D. Must complete and sign the department's "Authorization for Release of Information" form authorizing a background check;
- E. Must initial and sign the department's "Rules of the Ride-Along Program" form agreeing to abide by said rules (see Addendum 2).

VII. PROCEDURE

- A. Completed applications will be submitted to the Desk Officer or designee for processing. All applications will be maintained on file for a period of time determined by the Chief of Police.

- B. The Desk Officer or designee will ensure a records check on all applicants, according to established departmental procedures.
- C. Approved applications will be returned to the Desk Officer or designee for scheduling of the ride-along. Ride-along opportunities will be scheduled with as much advanced notice as practical, normally at least two (2) days in advance of the ride-along.
- D. The shift supervisor will be notified prior to any scheduled ride-along.

Ride-along opportunities will only be scheduled when sufficient shift staffing levels allow.

VIII. GENERAL GUIDELINES

- A. All persons authorized to ride in police vehicles will participate only in the capacity of passenger/observer. Ride-along participants will not assist in any arrest or exercise any force or authority, except that which is lawful for any member of the general public. Any strange or dangerous behavior on the part of the participant (per the opinion and discretion of the officer) will be reported in writing, and the participant will be disallowed from riding in the future.
- B. Participants will not operate any police vehicle, possess or handle firearms or weapons, or use any police equipment. (Exception: Full-time or retired commissioned officers may possess and handle their own firearms in accordance with T.C.A. 39-17-1350)
- C. Ride-along participation will be limited to one (1) ride-along every six (6) months or a maximum of two (2) per calendar year. Exceptions to this guideline will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.
- D. The shift supervisor will be responsible for assigning the observer to a non-probationary, Senior Police Officer.

Additional program guidelines are outlined in the “Rules of the Ride-Along Program” (Addendum 2). The observer must abide by all of the rules and guidelines of the ride-along program. Failure to do so will be grounds for immediate dismissal from the program.

IX. OFFICER RESPONSIBILITY

- A. When an officer has an assigned observer ride-along, he/she will always be mindful of the safety of the observer. The officer will use his/her discretion as to when an observer should exit the patrol car or otherwise observe his/her activities. Officers will not knowingly expose an observer to a dangerous or potentially dangerous situation. When doubt exists, the officer will direct the observer to remain in the patrol car or otherwise have them removed from the environment.

- B. Officers conducting a ride-along will notify Communications as to the presence of the observer.
- C. Officers conducting a ride-along will brief the observer on emergency radio procedures.
- D. Officers accompanied by ride-along observers will not engage in any vehicle pursuit of offenders.
- E. Officers will take precautions to prevent the viewing or access to information provided by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation (i.e., N.C.I.C., NLETS, etc.) via the MDT, which is confidential or intended for dissemination to law enforcement personnel only.

Officers shall not allow participants to enter private homes or other areas where a citizen has a reasonable expectation of privacy, unless the citizen has given explicit consent. This includes members of the media.

X. REVIEW PROCESS

An annual review of this policy will be conducted to determine if it should be revised, cancelled or continued in its present form.

This order shall remain in effect until revoked or superseded by competent authority.

ADDENDUM 1:
RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND INDEMNITY AGREEMENT

This Agreement is made between _____ (hereinafter referred to as the Undersigned) and the Germantown Police Department.

The Undersigned desires to observe the operations of the Germantown Police Department and the Germantown Police Department agrees to allow the Undersigned to accompany members of the Germantown Police Department in the performance of their duties in consideration of the Undersigned executing this Agreement. The Undersigned, his/her/their/its agents, servants, heirs, executors and administrators, successors and assigns, and all other persons or organizations, both known and unknown, HEREBY RELEASES, WAIVES, DISCHARGES, AND COVENANTS NOT TO SUE the Germantown Police Department, the City of Germantown and/or any of its employees, agents, or servants for any loss or damage and any claims or demands therefor on account of injury to the person or property of the Undersigned, including bodily injuries and damages, caused by or resulting from the negligence of the Germantown Police Department, the City of Germantown, and/or any of its agents, employees, or servants, or the actions of unknown persons the Undersigned encounters by virtue of accompanying members of the Germantown Police Department in the performance of their duties.

The Undersigned HEREBY AGREES TO DEFEND, INDEMNIFY, AND SAVE AND HOLD HARMLESS the Germantown Police Department, the City of Germantown, and their agents and employees and servants from any loss, liability, damages, or costs and expenses, including, but not limited to, attorney fees, court costs, and investigative fees that may incur due to the presence of the Undersigned as an observer accompanying members of the Germantown Police Department, regardless of whether caused by the negligence of the Germantown Police Department, the City of Germantown, and/or any of their agents, employees, servants, also contributed to such loss, liability, damages or costs and expenses.

The Undersigned HEREBY ASSUMES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RISK OF BODILY INJURY, DEATH, OR PROPERTY DAMAGE due to or resulting from the negligence of the Germantown Police Department, the City of Germantown, and/or any of their agents, employees, and servants, or the actions of unknown persons the Undersigned encounters by virtue of accompanying members of the Germantown Police Department in the performance of their duties. The Undersigned understands that some of the activities or persons he/she may encounter or otherwise become involved with, including, but not limited to, high speed operation of motor vehicles, exposure to individuals: (a) suspected of criminal violations, (b) insane and/or emotionally disturbed people, (c) prisoners and inmates, (d) the operation and use of firearms, explosives, and other destructive devices, the restraint and arrest of violent people, and (e) the exposure to hazardous materials and substances.

The Undersigned recognizes that the accompanying of members of the Germantown Police Department in the performance of their duties is a high risk and dangerous event to participate in and the Undersigned acknowledges and accepts these risks.

SIGNATURE

PHONE NUMBER

DATE

E-MAIL ADDRESS

WITNESS

DATE

ADDENDUM 2:
RULES OF THE RIDE ALONG PROGRAM

1. All observers will be dressed in professional attire. No jeans or T-shirts will be worn. The clothing should be in good condition, free of any emblems, markings, insignias, or lettering.
2. Observers should always stay in the police vehicle during all official police functions where the officer is conducting official police business, unless otherwise directed by the officer. This includes traffic stops, suspicious person/vehicle calls, domestic calls, and any other situations deemed unsafe by the officer. **(Officers shall not allow participants to enter private homes or other areas where a citizen has a reasonable expectation of privacy, unless the citizen has given explicit consent. This includes members of the media).**
3. Observers must be respectful and courteous to all officers and the public at all times.
4. Observers may not operate any equipment, radios, or vehicles while riding in the ride-along program. In an emergency, participants may take appropriate action to protect themselves and/or officers.
5. Observers will not be allowed to have any contact with suspects or prisoners being questioned and/or transported.
6. Observers will have to arrive and attend roll call prior to the shift during which they are participating in the ride-along except when otherwise authorized by the Lieutenant on that shift. They will need to return to the squad room with the officer at the end of the ride-along shift as well. This will be done in order to minimize any type of disturbance to the officer's shift and normal routine.
7. Any violation of these rules will be reported to the shift supervisor immediately and may result in immediate termination of that ride-along and/or the indefinite termination of any future ride-along for that individual.
8. Unless the participant is a commissioned law enforcement officer, observers are not allowed to carry a weapon while participating in the program.
9. No audio, video, or other recordings may be made during the ride-along without the written consent of the Chief of Police.
10. Ride-alongs must be scheduled at least two (2) days in advance of the shift to allow for scheduling changes. Full-time, current commissioned officers may wear their departmentally issued uniform during their ride-alongs. They must abide by all of the above rules, except in cases where their assistance is requested.
11. If a ride-along participant is either arrested and/or charged for a crime, the participant's status will be suspended until their case has been investigated and cleared or dismissed. An arrest and conviction of a crime will automatically disqualify a participant, and any approval to participate shall become null and void.
12. Any violation of the ride-along policy may result in immediate dismissal from the program by the shift supervisor or any other City of Germantown Police supervisor.
13. Observers may be authorized to ride with officers up to twice per year, or once every six months. Special approval for additional ride-along time may be requested from the Chief of Police.

_____ I have received a copy of the rules of the ride along program.

_____ I have read and understood the rules of the program.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of participant

Date

This copy is to be kept on file.