

City of Marco Island

Rules and Guidelines for Vehicle/Vessel Ride Along Policy

To establish guidelines for both the operator and observer, the following rules and regulations are hereby delineated for their information:

1. To be considered for the Ride-Along Program, the citizen must be at least eighteen years of age and appear in person at the Department's main office between 8:00 AM and 4:00 PM, at which time a Ride-Along application form will be completely filled out. Applicants must have a photo ID or valid driver's license when applying.
2. After reviewing the completed form, the Department Director or his/her designee, will assign a date and time for the applicant to report on, which will be written on the bottom of the application form, in the space marked: *Assignment*. The applicant will be advised to report for their assignment, at the date and time indicated.
3. Observers will be scheduled on **Wednesdays** and **Saturdays** only.
 - A. They will be assigned for a **maximum** of four hours. The ride can be terminated at any time prior to the expiration of that period, by either the operator or observer.
 - B. Observers will be allowed to ride only from 8:00 AM to Midnight. No one will be allowed to ride between midnight and 8:00 AM.
 - C. Observers will be limited to two rides per year, unless otherwise authorized by the Department Director.
4. After the observer accepts all stated conditions, the completed application form and the Ride Along Waiver form will be attached to this Rules and Guidelines form.
 - A. At that time the applicant will be required to read the waiver form, date and sign it, and turn it over to the Department Director or his/her designee. The supervisor will also date and sign the waiver. A valid photo ID or driver's license must be presented at this time.

- B. Upon completion of the above, the applicant may enter the Vehicle/vessel with his/her host operator.
5. For consideration to participate in the *Ride-Along Program*, the applicant must understand and conform to the following policies:
- A. The Ride-Along Waiver form must be signed, prior to participation.
 - B. Persons under the age of eighteen must have a written parental or legal guardian endorsement, in addition to the waiver of liability, prior to participation.
 - C. The operator may terminate the observation ride at any time, due to unusual or hazardous duty conditions or misconduct on the part of the observer.
 - D. An observer may not carry any type of weapon or firearm even if they possess a valid concealed Weapons Permit issued by a governmental body.
 - E. The observer must dress in good taste, consistent with community standards and appropriate for contact with the public and that will provide for the safety of the observer (no shorts, jeans or offensive T-shirts or foot wear that could pose a danger). The Director has the authority to decline permission to ride due to inappropriate clothing.
 - F. For the observer's safety they must comply with the directions of the operator in all situations and must conduct themselves in a civil and courteous manner at all times.
 - G. Observers should be aware that the possibility exists of being subpoenaed to court to testify as a witness in regards to his/her observations of particular incidents.
 - H. All observers must for his/her safety wear a safety vest provided by the department and it will be clearly marked *OBSERVER*.
 - I. Observers must wear their seat belts at all times while in a vehicle.
 - J. No smoking is permitted in any City vehicle or vessel.
 - K. No tape recordings, cameras, or similar devices are allowed without prior approval from the Department Director.
 - L. For safety reasons observers may not handle any of the operator's equipment.

- M. Observers must remain in the vehicles until the operator authorizes them to exit.
 - N. The Directors retain the authority to assign riders with operators they deem qualified to provide the information sought by the observers and to insure the riders safety.
6. Due to the inherent dangers associated with Fire and Police work the following additional guidelines and policies are delineated:

A. Police Department:

- a. Participants shall be considered observers only and under the direct supervision of the assigned Officer during the ride-along.
- b. Criminal history checks will be run on all riders that are unknown by the supervisor of the assigned Officer to determine the suitability of the rider participation.
- c. Participants must not become involved in any incident the Officer is handling. This includes discussions of an incident with victims, witnesses or suspects.
- d. All persons riding in the program must understand that any and all information that is observed, overheard or they otherwise become privy to is confidential and is not to be discussed or otherwise transmitted to others. It is critical that they respect the privacy of others. All medical information is protected by law and should not be discussed. Any questions should be addressed to the Officer they are riding with.

B. Fire Department:

- a. Refer to the City of Marco Island Fire-Rescue Department Ride-Along Program General Policy Information and Guidelines.

City of Marco Island Fire-Rescue Department Ride-Along Program General Policy Information and Guidelines

PURPOSE:

The Marco Island Fire Rescue Ride-Along/Observer program is intended to provide the public of Marco Island with an opportunity to understand and appreciate the mission as well as the skills and abilities of their Fire-Rescue personnel. The Marco Island Fire Rescue Department will provide a Ride-Along/Observer program for qualified adults and students over the age of 16. The student portion of the program is designed to help build career paths into the public service/medical field.

BACKGROUND:

The Fire Rescue Department has always reached out to the public in an effort to inform them of their mission, duties and responsibilities. Ride-along/observer programs have been a wonderful tool for the public, especially high school students to encourage them to consider public service and the fire rescue/medical service as a career. Because of the nature of fire rescue it is critically important that individuals who may be in a position of observing emergency scenes maintain a level of maturity and respect for the rules and requirements of the fire rescue para-military organization. The granting of the privilege to participate in a ride-along program is based upon availability and an interview process by officers of the organization. It is critical that individuals participating in this program understand that they must respect the rights and privacy of the public experiencing the emergency incident and all safety rules and requirements as directed by their assigned officer. The ride along/observer program is a privilege not a right and any individual may be denied the privilege to observe.

PARTICIPATION:

- ✓ 1. The minimum age for a participant is 16 years of age.
- ✓ 2. All candidates will go through an interview process with an officer of the Fire Rescue Department.
- ✓ 3. Students must maintain a GPA of 2.0 or higher in high school in order to be a Ride-Along/Observer with the Marco Island Fire Rescue Department.
- ✓ 4. All Ride-Along/Observers that are unknown by the Fire Rescue Department personnel are required by City Policy to have a background check completed by the City of Marco Island Police Department. Prior to their initial ride-along date the applicant will go to the City of Marco Island Police Department located at 51 Bald Eagle Drive and fill out the necessary paperwork. Upon completion and approval of the background check the Fire Rescue Department will be notified of the eligibility to ride.
- ✓ 5. All Ride-Along/Observer candidates must sign a waiver. By signing a waiver of liability, the participant assumes all risk of injury, and waives/releases any claims against the Fire Rescue Department members or the City of Marco Island. The Guest Passenger and Observer Request and Release Form must be signed prior to any scheduled ride.
- ✓ 6. The Chief or designee may approve any minor as an observer after an interview with the parents or legal guardian, proof of grades and presentation of the written and witnessed approval form signed by his or her parents.
- ✓ 7. Riding assignments for the general public will be limited to two times per year for each individual unless authorized by the Chief or his designee. Exceptions to the two times per year limit that might be considered are formal program participants such as Leadership Marco, C.E.R.T. the Fire Rescue Foundation etc. Due to the interactive nature of City Departments, Marco Island City Employees and City Council members are exempt from the requirements of a waiver or number of ride times per year.
- ✓ 8. Ride-Along/Observers are limited to Wednesdays and Saturdays unless approved by the Fire Rescue Chief or his designee.
- ✓ 9. All observers must show respect to City employees and the general public at all times.
- ✓ 10. If an observer has any questions, concerns or accolades about employee actions during their assigned observation time they are to immediately bring it to the attention of the on duty Division Chief.

RIDE ALONG SAFETY CRITERIA

1. Participants are required to pre schedule their ride time through the Fire Rescue Department Deputy Chief's Office.
2. Participants are to report at the prescribed time and meet with the on duty Division Chief for assignment.
3. Participants may only ride between the hours of 9 A.M. and 9.P.M.
4. Participants shall maintain their personal appearance in a manner which is consistent with professionalism in the fire service and in keeping with applicable safety and accident prevention standards in the work place. All items of dress should be in good, clean condition. Sturdy, more protective fabrics should be worn. Long pants are required. Shirt with collar is preferable. Close-toed, sturdy shoes or boots are required. Thick, protective socks are preferable.
5. Participants must obey the orders and instructions given by the staff member to whom they are assigned.
6. All observers must wear the Observer Safety Vest while on an emergency call or scene.
7. Participants must not leave the immediate vicinity of the Fire Department station or vehicle at emergency scenes unless supervised by the staff member they are assigned to.
8. While in the Fire Station participants are restricted from personnel sleeping areas and medical supply areas.
9. Participants may only use station telephones, supplies and equipment with the approval of an officer. The use of City computers to access the Internet is prohibited.
10. At no time are participants allowed on Fire or EMS apparatus without a supervisor present.
11. Participants shall remain in the proximity of their assigned vehicle unless authorized by their assigned supervisor.
12. At no time on emergency medical calls will an observer be allowed to enter into a person's residence.
13. Because of the sensitivity and nature of medical calls observers may not disclose any medical information, individual's involved or medical procedures that they observed during their ride along/observation.
14. Upon completion of the ride along the individual will inform the officer on duty of their leaving and fill out necessary paperwork.

Note: When an individual leaves the station they need to remember that on emergency calls they have been intimately exposed to a fellow neighbors call for help. It is critical that they respect that individual and their family's privacy, as they would want their own respected. Medical information is protected by law and should not be discussed. Please refrain from discussion of the specifics of calls and if there is a question ask the on duty Division Chief.

We look forward to your participation in the Ride-Along/Observer Program and hope it will prove to be an exciting and rewarding experience.