

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

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**BULLETIN NO. 36**

**November 2012**

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**RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM**

**PURPOSE**

The purpose of this bulletin is to establish Department guidelines and an approval process for those individuals requesting to ride with units of the DC Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (DC Fire &EMS) as observers in addition to those individuals authorized to ride within the scope of emergency incidents, standard operating procedures and existing jurisdictional agreements.

**PART A. MEDICAL RESPONSES**

**I. SCOPE**

Part A of this bulletin identifies those categories of individuals who are allowed to accompany agency pre-hospital care providers as they perform their duties. These personnel are permitted to be present in order to perform certain functions related to health care operations; medical care, treatment and payment. Participants will comply with all HIPAA requirements.

**II. AUTHORIZED INDIVIDUALS**

**1. Public Health Authorities**

A public health authority authorized by law to collect or receive protected health information for the purpose of preventing or controlling disease, injury or disability, including the reporting of vital events such as birth or death. Public health authority also includes an authority authorized to conduct public health surveillance, public health investigations, and public health interventions. This also includes any public health authority or other appropriate government agency that is authorized to receive reports of child abuse or neglect. These agencies may include, but are not limited to:

The Department of Health  
Child Fatality Review Committee  
MRDDA Fatality Review Committee  
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner  
Child and Family Services Agency  
Youth Services Rehabilitation Agency  
Department of Mental Health

D.C. Superior Court, Family Court  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Office of the D.C. Attorney General  
D.C. Office of Risk Management

## 2. Health Oversight Agencies

Health oversight agencies are authorized by law to perform oversight activities, including audits; civil, administrative, or criminal investigations; inspections; licensure or disciplinary actions; or civil, administrative or criminal proceedings or actions. Agencies which fall into this category include, but are not limited to:

The Office of the Inspector General  
Department of Health  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Office of the D.C. Attorney General  
D.C. Office of Human Rights  
D.C. Auditor  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

## 3. Law Enforcement Agencies

Law enforcement personnel including jurisdictional police departments i.e., Metropolitan Police Department, U.S. Park Service, and other state and federal agencies, for the purpose of providing security for the transportation of defendants and offenders needing medical treatment, and other public safety related functions.

## 4. Medical Personnel

An attending primary care-giver, nurse, or physician of the transported patient may join the patient in the ambulance for the purposes of medical care or treatment.

Students enrolled in a program of training at an accredited educational institution to become emergency medical technicians, paramedics, nurses, doctors or other medical professionals specializing in emergency medicine, provided that that the educational institution and DC Fire & EMS have jointly executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) governing the students' participation.

## 5. Contractors and Vendors

Contractors and vendors may be present during medical care and treatment to the extent necessary to perform field tests; quality assurance; trouble shooting; and repairs, replacement and maintenance of medical equipment, technological devices (including radios and computers) and vehicles.

## **PART B. RIDING WITH FIRE SUPPRESSION UNITS**

### **I. SCOPE**

This procedure covers those individuals approved by the Fire Chief to ride-along as an observer with operational fire units of the DC Fire & EMS. Adherence to this policy will ensure the safety of all personnel and the public and is the shared responsibility of the Incident Commander, the unit Officer-In-Charge (OIC), and the participant.

### **II. Participant requirements:**

- 1). Submit request to the Fire Chief that outlines reason for ride along; if approved:
  - a. Be 18 years of age or older.
  - b. Be of sound physical and mental condition; possessing no physical or other conditions which will interfere with or limit participation.
  - c. Participants shall not wear or have access to any complete uniform, official uniform shirt with patch, or personal protective gear that might create the mistaken impression that he or she is an employee.
  - d. Participants are strictly observers and are not to engage in actual firefighting or rescue operations.
  - e. There must be a passenger seat available and the person must remain seated and belted when riding Department apparatus and observe all applicable safety rules.
  - f. The ride along may be terminated by the supervising battalion fire chief at any time due to the immediate needs of the Department.
  - g. The participant may not enter a “hot zone” at any time.
  - h. A participant’s authorization may be revoked if it becomes apparent to the OIC that the participant’s conduct is not in the best interest of the Department or creates an immediate safety concern.

## **PART C. PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES**

Individuals must visit the Public Affairs Office (PAO) and complete FEMS Form 157.1, ***OAP Application Form***, and sign a Form 157, ***Liability/Privacy Waiver***, form prior to participating in a ride-along. The forms will be forwarded to the Fire Chief for approval. If approved, the PAO will notify the Assistant Fire Chief of Operations who will ensure the operations division coordinates all logistical arrangements.

In general, approval for individual participants will be for no more than one 12 hour operational period at a time unless expressly authorized by the Fire Chief. A copy of these forms shall be maintained in the DFC-Operations office. Battalion and Platoon Commanders will ensure that all procedural guidelines are being complied with.

All documentation shall be forwarded to the PAO for appropriate action. The PAO will maintain a database by calendar year of all requests under this program for review and evaluation including:

- Participant's name
- Unit participant is assigned to ride
- Time the ride is approved
- Date the request is approved or disapproved
- Date the individual completed participation
- Reason for participation

Requests for special exceptions to this directive must be made in writing to the D.C. Fire/EMS Chief.

**The Ride-Along Program may be cancelled at any time for any reason at the discretion of the Fire Chief.**

The revisions to this directive are effective immediately.