





POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

	RIDE-ALONGS	
	POLICY NUMBER: 33-3	ISSUING AUTHORITY 
	EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2025	Christine A. Elow Police Commissioner

I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

A Ride-Along Program can provide an opportunity for interested members of the community, students, and non-sworn employees of the City to experience and gain insight into the operations of the department first hand. This policy defines the eligibility requirements, disqualifying factors, and procedures necessary to successfully administer the program.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Cambridge Police Department to:

- A. provide ride-along opportunities to members of the public and City of Cambridge employees who meet the requirements and who do not have any associated disqualifying factors;
- B. establish safety and decorum protocols for the program; and
- C. administer the program in a fair, impartial, and equitable manner.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. *Host Officer*: A sworn member of the department who agrees to conduct ride-alongs on an intermittent basis.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Eligibility
 - 1. The department Ride-Along Program is offered to community members, students, and persons employed within the City. Every attempt will be made to accommodate interested persons; however, an applicant may be denied for one or more of the disqualifying factors or for any reason identified by the Commissioner or designee.

2. Disqualifying factors include but are not limited to:
 - a. under 18 years of age;
 - b. prior criminal history;
 - c. pending criminal action;
 - d. pending lawsuit against this or any other police department;
 - e. recommendation of any supervisor.

B. Request Procedures

1. The applicant must complete and submit to the program administrator a ride-along application and liability waiver form, which can be found on the department's website. The required information includes a copy of a valid ID or driver's license, current address, and telephone number.
2. The application form and liability waiver form will be forwarded to the Records Unit for a criminal history check.
3. The program administrator will schedule a date, based on availability, no sooner than one week from the date of the application. Copies of the application will be forwarded to the appropriate department units for record-keeping and scheduling purposes. The program administrator will send notification of acceptance to the participant by mail or email.
4. Family members of department officers shall follow all protocols as outlined in this policy. If a family member from out-of-town requests to participate and the standard authorization procedure is not feasible, the Commissioner or designee may consider and approve the request.

C. Criminal History Checks

1. All applicants shall be subject to a criminal history check, which may include CJIS and NLETS records check, assuming that the applicant is not an employee of the department.

D. Requirements

1. Civilian participants are allowed to ride along no more than once every six months. Exceptions include Cadets, Chaplains, police applicants, and any other person approved by the Commissioner or designee to ride along more frequently.
2. No more than one person shall be allowed to ride along in a police cruiser at any given time.

E. Suitable Attire

1. Any person approved to ride with a host officer is required to be appropriately groomed and dressed in a collared shirt or blouse, slacks, and shoes. Sandals, T-shirts, tank tops, shorts, and torn jeans are not permitted.

F. Duration

1. All ride-alongs shall be limited to two hours and may be extended at the discretion of the host officer with the approval of the Shift Commander.

G. Police Officer Ride-Alongs

1. Generally, off-duty police officers of the Cambridge Police Department or any other police department are not authorized to participate in the Ride-Along Program without express permission from the Commissioner or designee.
2. If such a ride-along is approved, off-duty officers shall not present themselves as police officers or participate in any enforcement activity unless emergency circumstances dictate otherwise.
3. Officers on probation are prohibited from hosting a ride-along.

H. Host Officer Responsibilities

1. As soon as the host officer greets the participant and prior to entering the cruiser, the officer shall notify ECD that the ride-along is beginning and provide the name, address, and emergency contact information to the Shift Commander.
2. If at any time, in the officer's best judgement, a situation presents a risk to the safety of the participant, the officer shall let the participant out of the vehicle in a well-lit place and advise ECD to dispatch a cruiser to pick up the participant as soon as possible. The ride-along may be continued or terminated based on the circumstances.
3. Upon completion of the ride-along, the officer shall notify ECD who will make an entry in the CAD system.
4. Host officers may not initiate or enter a motor vehicle pursuit while a participant is in the cruiser.
5. Officers shall not include a ride-along participant in any special operation, such as planned arrests, execution of warrants, and multi-agency operations.

I. Instructions for Participants

1. Participants shall always follow the directions of the host officer.
2. Participants shall not become involved in any investigation, handling of evidence, discussions with victims or suspects, or handling of any police department equipment.
3. Participants may terminate the ride-along at any time and request that the officer return them to their home or to the station. The officer may terminate the ride-along if it interferes with the performance of the officer's duties.
4. Participants shall not enter a private residence without the express consent of the primary occupant or other authorized person.
5. Participants shall not be present in any residences or situations that would jeopardize their safety or cause undue stress or embarrassment to a victim or any other person.

6. Participants shall be seat belted while the cruiser is in motion but may remain without a seat belt while the cruiser is parked.
7. Under no circumstances shall a participant carry a weapon of any kind, or any object that could be construed as a weapon.
8. Participants may be required to wear body armor at the discretion of the Shift Commander.
9. Participants may not use social media platforms, recording devices, or cameras during any ride-along without written approval of the Office of the Police Commissioner.
10. Participants shall not arrive with the odor of alcohol on their breath, appear or be intoxicated or under the influence of drugs, or have taken medication that may impair judgement or the ability to follow directions.
11. Participants shall be advised of the possibility that they may be called as witnesses in an incident that occurred during the ride-along and that the participant's name may be included in the official police report. Such reports may cause the participant to be subpoenaed in court as a witness.