



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



Tours, Visitors, and Ride-Alongs

Eff. Date 11/11/2025

Purpose

Tours of police facilities will be conducted for approved groups who have expressed an interest in observing the functions of the Madison Police Department (MPD).

Most MPD facilities have areas within them that are secured and not accessible to the general public. We recognize that members of the general public and other law enforcement officials will have a need to enter into these secure areas from time to time. When doing so, all visitors will be expected to comply with all security measures put in place.

Unlike many jobs in today's society, the duties of a police employee are not easily described to persons outside the profession. Therefore, the purpose of allowing community members to ride with police employees is to add to the public's knowledge of the complexities of the law enforcement profession and of the relationship between law enforcement and the public.

Procedure

TOURS OF POLICE FACILITIES

Tour screening and coordination will be the responsibility of the Public Information Officer (PIO) and conducted by various volunteers of the MPD. All tour groups must be escorted at all times.

VISITORS OF POLICE FACILITIES

Visitors coming into any secure area of a police facility will need to be escorted by an employee of the MPD. Visitors must sign the MPD visitor log and must wear a visitor badge so that it is in plain view.

RIDE-ALONG PROCEDURE

Ride-Along Program Responsibility of the Police Executive Office Supervisor

The administration of the Ride-Along Program is the responsibility of the Police Executive Office Supervisor. Requests for permission to participate in a ride-along will be handled by this office unless the ride-along participant is a non-commissioned MPD employee or an intern, or the ride-along was initiated by an officer. Eligibility of each applicant will be determined by the Police Executive Office Supervisor. The Police Executive Office Supervisor will be responsible for collecting the name, address, date of birth, and home phone number of each person requesting to ride. The Police Executive Office Supervisor will conduct background checks on applicants. The Police Executive Office Supervisor will disseminate viable applications to district commanders who will schedule officers to accommodate ride-along assignments.

Ride-Along Database

A ride-along database will be maintained electronically by the Police Executive Office Supervisor. The data will contain a complete listing of those who have participated in the ride-along program including the date of their ride-along and the officer they were assigned to.

Generally, a person taking part in the program may not ride-along more than once per year unless the ride-along participant is a non-commissioned employee, an intern, or a public safety cadet, or the ride-along was initiated by an officer.

Voluntary Employee Participation

Employee participation in the ride-along program will be voluntary. Employees may wish to advise their commander of their willingness to participate in the program.

Waiver of Liability Form

A Waiver of Liability must be completed by the person requesting a ride-along through our public website.

Duration of Ride-Along

It is suggested that the length of the ride-along period will be four (4) hours.

Juvenile Ride-Along

All juvenile (ages 15-17) ride-along periods will be conducted between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. The majority of the ride-alongs will be scheduled as early in the afternoon as possible. Extensions to 10:00 p.m. for a juvenile ride-along may be granted by the Officer-in-Charge (OIC). Requests for juveniles under the age of 15 must be approved by the Chief of Police.

Public Safety Cadets, a program for youth ages 14-20, are exempt from the age and hour restrictions set in place for juveniles.

Employee Initiated Ride-Alongs

MPD personnel will be allowed to initiate ride-alongs for relatives or friends. Employees should obtain the approval of their immediate supervisor or OIC. MPD personnel will ensure that the respective ride-along has completed the Ride-Along Waiver form (located on SharePoint, Forms & Resources, Forms, Patrol).

The number of ride-alongs an employee will be allowed to take will be determined on an individual basis. Some criteria in making the determination will be the following:

1. The number of employee-initiated ride-alongs performed.
2. The effect of the ride-alongs on the employee's ability to perform assigned duties.
3. The time period covered by the ride-along involved.

The number of ride-alongs determination will be made in conjunction with the Police Executive Office Supervisor and the officer's supervisor(s).

Non-Commissioned Employee Ride-Alongs

Non-commissioned employees of the MPD may be authorized to ride-along (on duty time) more than once per year if their supervisor believes such action will increase the employee's understanding and performance of assigned duties.

Intern Ride-Alongs

Persons working on projects involving the MPD may be granted permission to extend the ride-along period. Interns working with the MPD should complete the Internship Waiver of Liability form prior to the start of the internship, if the internship includes ride-alongs with MPD personnel. Public Safety Cadets should complete the Public Safety Cadets Wavier of Liability form at the beginning of each calendar year.

Employee Participation

Employees on probation will not be allowed to participate in the ride-along program unless prior approval has been obtained from the employee's Commanding Officer.

One Ride-Along Limit

There will only be one ride-along participant assigned to an employee at any given time unless approved by the OIC (e.g., camera crew for approved interview).

Scene Guidelines

Officers shall adhere to the following guidelines when determining whether to allow a ride-along to enter a scene:

1. Ride-along participants may not accompany officers into private residences or into any other place not readily open to the public when the officer's legal basis for entering is not based upon consent (i.e., warrant execution, exigent circumstances, community caretaker, etc.).
2. Ride-along participants may accompany officers into private residences or into any other places not readily open to the public when:
 - a. The owner/community member or other person in control of the premises expressly consents to the ride-along participant's entry.
 - b. The ride-along participant is directly assisting the officer in the performance of the officer's duties (example: intern assisting with searching or evidence collection during search warrant execution).
3. Ride-along participants may accompany officers any place that is open to the public subject to state and local laws (i.e., underage persons not to enter taverns).
4. Ride-along participants may not exit the squad car during a traffic stop prior to the occupants being secured, unless it is necessary to ensure their safety or when approved by a supervisor.

Ride-Along Personal Appearance

All ride-along participants are visible representatives of the City of Madison and its Police Department and as such, a neat, clean, and professional appearance is required. Ride-along participants shall adhere to the following guidelines regarding their personal appearance during their ride-along experience:

1. Clothing shall not be torn, frayed, stained, excessively faded, or sheer to the skin.
2. Clothing shall not be excessively loose or tight fitting and must not pose a safety hazard when accompanying officers on calls for service.
3. Clothing, buttons, badges, or pins shall not have political or potentially offensive words, terms, logos, pictures, cartoons, or slogans.
4. Shorts may be worn as long as they are knee length or longer and are professional in appearance.
5. Undergarments shall not be visible.
6. Footwear should consist of closed toed shoes. Sandals, open toed shoes, or open back shoes could potentially be a safety hazard and shall not be worn.
7. Strapless, halter, spaghetti strap, low cut shirts, tank tops, or muscle shirts shall not be worn unless worn under another shirt.
8. Sweatpants, bib overalls, lounge pants, and athletic pants and shorts are not acceptable.
9. Headgear shall be appropriate for the assignment. Scarves and head covers that are required for religious or medical purposes shall be allowed.
10. Public Safety Cadets may not wear their Cadet uniform, Cadet t-shirt, or other Cadet or MPD apparel.

Restriction Applications

The restrictions outlined in this SOP apply to all civilian ride-along participants, including interns, students, and non-commissioned MPD employees.

Original SOP: 02/25/2015

(Revised: 02/12/2016, 11/09/2017, 08/13/2018, 09/02/2020, 10/19/2021, 01/31/2023, 11/11/2025)

(Reviewed Only: 12/20/2016)