



# MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

### 580 – RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM

**GENERAL ORDER:** 2025-25  
**ISSUED:** June 16, 2025

**EFFECTIVE:** June 16, 2025

**REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:**  
Assistant Chief Steven Johnson  
**DATE:** April 22, 2025

**ACTION:** Amends General Order 2023-43 (June 12, 2023)

**WILEAG STANDARD(S):** NONE

#### **580.00 PURPOSE**

It is the policy of the Milwaukee Police Department to allow citizens to accompany police members for the purpose of specific media relations and/or patrol operations. Certain restrictions and procedures will apply to those persons who may be authorized to ride along as passengers in a Milwaukee Police Department vehicle. It is recognized that certain benefits may be derived from allowing citizens to observe police activities. The primary considerations when permitting a ride-along shall be the benefits to the community and to the police department.

#### **580.05 RIDE ALONG REQUIREMENTS**

##### **A. ELIGIBLE PERSONS**

1. Must be at least 18 years of age.
2. Must be able to fulfill the insurance and contractual requirement set forth in the indemnity agreement and have them approved by the manager of the Public Information Office.

##### **B. MEDIA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS**

1. Any media organization/representative, agency, law enforcement officer, private citizen or government official who requests a ride-along shall contact the manager of the Public Information Office in advance to make a formal request to participate in a ride along. The request will be evaluated by the manager of the Public Information Office, taking into consideration the availability of resources, timeliness, and the good of the service. After approval has been granted, the participant shall submit a written request on their agency or company letterhead to the Office of the Chief.
2. Employers of persons requesting a ride-along, including those who are self employed, are required to complete and sign the *Ride-Along Application*, release, indemnification agreement and release form, and agreement to release audio, video, and photographic media form. The indemnification and release form and agreement to release audio, video, and photographic media form shall be filled out on a yearly basis by the employer/corporation to cover all eligible employees requesting a ride-along.

3. The Chief of Police, or designee, or manager of the Public Information Office may deny any request for a ride-along based upon safety, resources available at the time and the benefit to the community and the Milwaukee Police Department.

#### **580.10 RIDE ALONG EXEMPTIONS**

- A. The following are exempt from the requirements for filing all required ride-along forms:
  1. Any city of Milwaukee employee or official may ride in a department vehicle, including persons who are full-time, part-time, auxiliary, or under contract after receiving authorization from the manager of the Public Information Office.
  2. Civilian police department employees provided that they comply with section 580.15 of this procedure.
  3. Any employee of government or a private agency working in concert with the Milwaukee Police Department.
- B. Any commissioner, investigator, or the executive director of the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission is not required to obtain prior authorization nor complete the application/release ride along forms. However, the Office of the Chief and the commanding officer of the affected district or division shall be given reasonable notice of the intended ride along whenever practicable.

#### **580.15 PROCEDURES FOR RIDE-ALONGS**

##### **A. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE**

1. The manager of the Public Information Office, or designee, shall be responsible for the review and approval of all ride-along requests originating from any media organization/representative, company or agency, government official, private citizen, law enforcement personnel, or any high profile person(s).
2. After requests are approved by the Public Information Office, the manager of the Public Information Office shall give the commanding officer of the work location in which the ride-along will take place reasonable notice prior to the ride-along. The manager of the Public Information Office shall approve department member(s) who will conduct the ride-along.
3. When a ride along is approved through the Public Information Office all related forms shall be retained by the manager of the Public Information Office.
4. Any questions regarding the ride-along program and completion of the required documents can be directed to the Public Information Office.

##### **B. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE WORK LOCATION**

1. Commanding officers are authorized to review and approve probation/parole agents, community prosecutors, community partners/staff assistant and domestic violence

- advocates to participate in a ride-along at their work location. When a commanding officer approves a ride-along they shall approve a department member to conduct the ride-along.
2. When a ride-along is approved by the commanding officer they shall notify the manager of the Public Information Office prior to the ride-along.
  3. Commanding officers are authorized to allow civilian personnel of their command to participate in a ride-along program. Participation shall be on a voluntary basis. Upon completion of the ride-along, the commanding officers shall review all employee ride-along evaluations and place them in the employee's personnel files.
  4. The work location's spare protective soft body armor shall be worn by every participant in the program. If the person declines the use of the body armor, the ride-along shall not be conducted. The department member conducting the ride-along shall ensure the participant is wearing the protective soft body armor at all times during the ride-along.
  5. All forms and documents received by the commanding officer of a work location shall be retained at the respective work location.

#### C. RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISORY OFFICERS

1. The work location supervisor shall ensure that the necessary documents have been completed in their entirety prior to a ride-along. No ride-along will be permitted without completion of these documents.
2. If the ride-a-long participant is not a department member, the supervisor will enter the participant into the [SharePoint Electronic Visitors Log](#) (see SOP 780.10 for more on the visitor's log) and issue the participant an orange visitor ID card. The orange visitors ID must be prominently displayed while the ride-a-long participant is in any non-public area of any police facility.

**Note: A person with an orange visitor ID card must be under constant escort or supervision by a uniformed member of the department or by a department member displaying a black or white police ID card.**

3. The supervisory officer shall complete the section titled, "Signature of Reviewing Supervisor" on the application form. The reviewing supervisor will ensure that the ride-along is conducted only during the designated times indicated on the application form.

#### D. RESPONSIBILITIES OF DEPARTMENT MEMBERS CONDUCTING A RIDE-ALONG

1. The Milwaukee Police Department members who conduct the ride-along have the final authority in directing the participant to stay inside the police vehicle or leave the vehicle if circumstances allow. If the participant refuses to comply with any procedure set forth in this standard operating procedure or interferes with any investigation or operation, the officer(s) shall immediately notify their supervisor or

- shift commander of this fact. If appropriate, the supervisor or shift commander shall terminate the ride-along providing the participant with the reason for such action.
2. The officer(s) conducting the ride-along shall not allow the participant to enter a private residence or business not open to the general public without the owner's permission.
  3. Officer(s) shall not transport any prisoners while conducting a ride-along.
  4. The officer(s) conducting the ride-along should, if possible, avoid pursuit driving and other high-risk activities, always taking into consideration the added risk inherent with the addition of a ride-along participant.
  5. Officer(s) shall ensure that the ride-along is conducted only during the designated and approved times indicated on the application form.

#### E. CIVILIAN EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Civilian employees who wish to participate in a ride-along shall submit a *Department Memorandum* (form PM-9E) to their commanding officer for approval. The report shall include the date and duration of any previous ride-along(s). Participation will only be allowed when overtime expenditures are not required to maintain proper staffing levels.
2. Participating civilian employees shall wear soft body armor while on the ride-along.
3. Participating civilian employees shall follow the directions of the officer conducting the ride-along.
4. Upon completion of a ride-along, civilian employees shall submit a *Department Memorandum* (form PM-9E) report to their commanding officer, which will include an evaluation of the ride-along program and any suggestions to improve it.

#### F. CITIZEN ACADEMY STUDENT

1. Citizen academy students must complete a ride-along in order to successfully earn a certificate of completion. Students shall complete the *Ride-Along Application* form (form PR-19) and *Ride-Along Waiver of Liability and Release* (form PR-20). Citizen academy students are public service volunteers and therefore exempt from mandatory insurance coverage requirements.
2. The manager of the Office of Community Outreach and Engagement shall be responsible for the dissemination and retention of all citizen academy related ride-along applications and forms.

### **580.20 APPLICATION/RELEASES**

- A. Department members conducting a ride-along shall ensure that the necessary documents have been completed, approved, signed, and dated for each participant.

**B. FORMS**

1. Ride-Along documents include:
  - a. *Ride-Along Application* form (form PR-19).
  - b. *Ride-Along Waiver of Liability and Release* (form PR-20).
  - c. *Ride-Along Indemnity Agreement* and release (form PR-21).
  - d. *Ride-Along Agreement to Release Audio, Video, and Photographic Media* (form PR-22).
2. All persons who participate are required to complete all of the ride-along application and release forms, which must be reviewed and approved by a supervisor.

**C. REQUIREMENT OF MANDATORY INSURANCE COVERAGE**

Prior to final ride-along approval of any agency, media organization, self-employed person, or private citizen, the following documentation of a "certificate of insurance" must be submitted, indicating the following coverage:

1. Worker's compensation insurance, including employer's liability of no less than \$100,000 for bodily injury by accident, each accident; \$100,000 for bodily injury by disease, each employee; policy limits of \$500,000 for bodily injury by disease. Lower limits are acceptable only if the limits are on underlying insurance, so long as the umbrella coverage reaches the limits stated.
2. General liability, including contractual liability, with limits of \$1,000,000, each occurrence; and \$1,000,000 for personal injury or as required by an umbrella.
3. Automobile liability, if any media vehicles might be involved, with limits of no less than \$1,000,000 per accident or as required by the umbrella.
4. Umbrella limits with no less than \$2,000,000 per occurrence in aggregate, and preferably \$5,000,000 per occurrence in aggregate.
5. The city of Milwaukee must be named on the certificate as an additional insured party with respect to employee participation.

**580.25 PROGRAM RESTRICTIONS****A. RESTRICTED ITEMS**

1. Participants are prohibited from photographing or audio or visually recording any portion of the ride along without the expressed written permission of the Chief of Police or the manager of the Public Information Office.
2. Other than sworn police officers or federal agents, certified by the state of Wisconsin

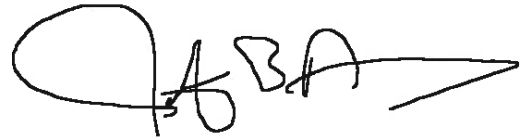
or the United States government, no person is allowed to be armed with any type of weapon while participating in the ride-along program.

**B. PARTICIPANTS CONDUCT**

1. Participants are only observers and shall not interfere with any investigation or normal performance of the officer's duty.
2. Participants shall follow the directions of the officer(s) conducting their ride-along.

**580.30 RETENTION OF RIDE-ALONG RECORDS**

All forms and documents received by the Office of the Chief will be retained at the Public Information Office in accordance with existing retention schedules. All forms and documents received by the commanding officer of a work location shall be retained at the respective work location in accordance with existing retention schedules.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.B. Norman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JEFFREY B. NORMAN  
CHIEF OF POLICE

JBN:mfk