

CHAPTER 124  
RIDE-A-LONG PROGRAM

DISCUSSION: The Ride-A-Long Program is designed to perform several functions: Department Training, citizen Education, Recruitment, department Orientation and Public Relations.

Department training is provided to department personnel who by the interactive nature of their job have a need to see the working conditions of field officers. This type of training is mainly used by the Telecommunications Division to allow dispatchers orientation to the physical layout of the city, so that they will be aware of routing problems and area conditions which allows better decisions in call assignments.

Citizen Education is the primary role of the Ride-A-Long Program. Education is accomplished by news articles written or presented by the media as a result of a ride, individual citizen rides recommended by an administrator or officer, department orientation offered to visitors from outside the area or to members of a civic group.

The program has served as a recruitment tool with Criminal Justice students and MS Police Crops candidates by providing a personal view of the Department in action.

The overall concept of the program is to allow non-sworn and non-departmental persons a brief window of opportunity to see the department and experience the working conditions of the street officer.

124.1 Definitions

- A. Law Enforcement Officers are defined as:
  - 1. Any person that currently works full time for a recognized State approved agency and has a current minimum standards certification.
  - 2. Any person who fits the above description from their home State.
- B. Department Non-Sworn Personnel are those persons employed by the City of Hattiesburg and are assigned to the Police Department.
- C. News Media is any person employed by or contracted by a recognized local or national news agency. This would include broadcast (TV/Radio) and print (Newspapers/Magazines).
- D. Criminal Justice Students are those people that are currently enrolled and taking classes under the direction of a Criminal Justice Program within an educational entity.
- E. Officer generally and in most cases refers to a Hattiesburg Police Officer.
- F. Civic Organizations are any group of persons organized under a state or national charter with the general intent to provide a public good. This would also include any organization or group with similar intent without a charter, but recognized by the City

of Hattiesburg or the public at large as one that provides a benefit to the citizens of Hattiesburg and/or the surrounding area.

- G. Riders for the purposes of this chapter refer to Ride-A-Long Program participants.
- H. Citizen is any person that is not defined as a Law Enforcement Officer or department non-sworn Personnel.
- I. Family Members as defined by the City of Hattiesburg Handbook; husband/wife, parents/children, siblings or in-laws.

#### 124.2 Ride-A-Long Program Participants

- A. Any individual riding as part of the program shall have on file a completed and approved Ride-A-Long form prior to the ride. In general, any individual from outside the department or non-sworn department personnel who are riding with an officer for the purpose of training, orientation or other informational purposes is considered a participant in the Ride-A-Long Program.
- B. Department non-sworn personnel may participate in the program as a training exercise under the following conditions:
  - 1. They must make the initial request to their Division Commander or designated person responsible for training requirements.
  - 2. The ride will be arranged with the Division in which the ride will occur. (Patrol, Traffic, Detectives, etc.)
  - 3. The ride will occur on Department time.
  - 4. No rides will be allowed in an off-duty status.
- C. News media are allowed to ride as part of a particular article or series of articles arranged through the Chief of Police or the PIO. Media personnel are required to fill out a form each time they ride no matter how short the duration.
- D. Criminal Justice students are only given special consideration if the school or instructor has made arrangements with the Chief of Police to participate in this program as a part of a class. These conditions are to be limited to the class duration (semester, quarter, etc.). For continuance affirmation shall be sought for each new class. If no arrangements have been made then the individual will be given the same regard as any civilian.
- E. Civic Organizations may make special arrangements with the Chief of Police to extend ride privileges to their membership. These conditions are usually blanket in nature covering all members of that organization and are usually used for a particular project or limited duration. As with CJ programs, Civic groups that may request an ongoing or recurring commitment shall have their intentions reaffirmed with each new project.
- F. Officer request shall be made by the officer by filling out the Ride-A-Long form and

submitting it to their immediate supervisor. Once that supervisor approves the ride, the form shall be submitted to the Division Head. The ride will only take place after all approval conditions are met. In the event the Division Commander is unavailable, the on duty supervisor may approve the ride. The signature blank normally reserved for the Division Commander shall remain blank.

- G. Citizens may make the request to any administrative level by filling out the form. The form shall be forwarded up and down the chain of command to acquire the appropriate signatures.
- H. Law Enforcement are considered as a participant when not acting under the color of office or otherwise defined as a non-participant. When participating in this program Law Enforcement shall abide by the program conditions, perimeters and exceptions.

### 124.3 Ride-A-Long Non-Participants

There are people who ride with Hattiesburg Police Officers that do not fall into the above ride-a-long status. When not participating in the program, under the following conditions, the rider will not need to fill out the Ride-A-Long form.

- A. Official Enforcement Actions Generally speaking short term rides that arise out of necessity while conducting OFFICIAL Law Enforcement business. Rides of this nature are related to specific current incident. Current is used to describe an incident time frame that is short enough to be determined as on going, or a continuation of the original incident. Examples that define this category are, but not limited to:
  - 1. Prisoners
  - 2. Suspects
  - 3. Witnesses
  - 4. Victims
- B. Area Law Enforcement Officers may ride as a non-participant as an official guest or while performing duties directly related to an incident or case from their jurisdiction or assisting in an active Hattiesburg Police investigation.
- C. Benefit Fund Program  
Each year the Hattiesburg Police Benefit Fund participates in a fund raiser in which area children are taken shopping with an officer. This project provides a Christmas for those that might not otherwise have one.
- D. Official Department Guest  
Official guest of the Department such as Instructors, dignitaries, consultants or persons working for the Department providing legal assistance, "expert" testimony, etc do not qualify as a Ride-A-Long. This allows for a short ride to be given to a specific destination for a specific purpose. Examples would include:
  - 1. Academy staff providing a ride to lunch for a guest instructor.

2. An "Expert" witness riding the pursuit route in preparation for the case.
3. Outside consultants participating in department evaluations or improvements.

#### 124.4 Program Specifics

It is the desire that the participant have an informative and enjoyable experience with the department's best ambassadors: the men and women that make up the department. Police work by nature is hazardous and somewhat unpredictable. Safety is always a concern and the following rules are in place to provide a margin of safety to the rider.

##### A. Parameters

1. Riders are under the direct control of the officer conducting the ride.
2. Riders are observers only and shall not get involved with police action to include interaction with witnesses, victims, suspects or prisoners. (This does not include one's basic right to self defense.)
3. Riders are not to bring any firearm, chemical agents, weapons, restraining devices or items that would be regarded as defensive tools.
4. Riders are to remain in or near the police unit unless otherwise directed by an officer.
5. Officers with riders will not become involved in a pursuit as primary or back-up units.
6. Local and NCIC checks shall be run and verified prior to rider participation. Felony convictions shall preclude any ride. Felony charges without conviction and misdemeanor history will be handled case by case as to participant approval.
7. Family members are prohibited from participating in the Ride-A-Long Program with due to the emotional stress and reactions which may occur during incidents handled by the Officer.

##### B. Exceptions

1. Law Enforcement and non-sworn departmental personnel are exempt from local and NCIC checks.
2. Law Enforcement are provided an exception to the weapons exclusion if authorized to carry under State Law.
3. Family members may seek an exclusion or exception to ride with the Officer that is their family member or other officer only through the Chief of Police.

##### C. File Maintenance

1. Division Commanders shall be responsible for file maintenance.
2. Purging shall occur on a regular basis. Record of ride need only be held for one (1) year from date of ride unless needed for an Investigation or pending

litigation.

D. Program Analysis

1. All ride-a-long participants will be asked to fill out and return an evaluation of the ride.
2. Upon receipt of the evaluation the Division Commander shall attach the evaluation to the Ride-A-Long Program form and remand to the file.
3. Division Commanders shall be responsible for program analysis as directed or requested by the Chief of Police.