

 <b>MIDDLETON POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>DATE</b> <b>March 15, 2013</b>	<b>POLICY</b> <b>8.2.01</b>
<b>SUBJECT: Police Observer Program</b>	<b>REVIEWED</b> July 13, 2018	

History: 1995, Updated 2/03, 5/07, 3/13, 07/15  
[WILEAG \(5th Ed.\) Standards](#): None

**PURPOSE**

The purpose this policy is to establish the Middleton Police Department Police Observer (Ride-Along) Program. The Police Observer program is intended to open lines of communication and foster community cooperation, support, and participation in the task of policing. The Police Observer program promotes a better understanding of the challenges, risks, and rewards of the police officer’s role in the community.

**POLICY**

This department will encourage participation a "Police Observer Program" (ride-along) within the limits required by police staffing and procedures. Officers or employees who are assigned "Police Observers" shall maintain a high level of professional conduct and be mindful of the safety and welfare of the observer. To the extent possible, officers are expected to explain police functions and procedures, while respecting the confidential nature of certain types of information.

**PROCEDURE**

**Eligibility**

All persons wishing to participate in the Ride-Along Program must be at least 18 years of age, must not have a recent criminal history, charges pending, outstanding warrants, an inordinate number of police traffic contacts or other violations, or currently be under a drivers' license suspension or revocation. The Sergeant in charge of the Community Awareness Programs will conduct a check of the Middleton Police Department records system, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation records and/or other resources to assist in the approval or denial of all ride along requests. Persons in a police department selection process may not participate outside of that process. The consent and signature of a parent or guardian allows persons under the age of 18 years of age to participate. Observers may not be armed even if they possess a concealed carry permit (law enforcement officers excepted). Police Observers are only allowed to ride for four hours or less at a time, twice a year, unless otherwise authorized.

**Application & Approval Process**

Persons wishing to participate in the Police Observer Program should complete a Police Observer Request and Waiver of Liability application form. Application forms can be obtained at the police department or [online](#). The consent and signature of a parent or guardian is required

for persons under the age of 18 years of age. The application should be delivered to the police department and routed to the Sergeant in charge of Community Awareness Programs (currently the ISB Sergeant).

### **Processing**

The Sergeant in charge of Community Awareness Programs or designee will vet, coordinate scheduling, notify the applicant, and forward the application to the appropriate Shift Commander for assignment. Upon completion of the ride-along, the application should be returned by the Shift Commander to the Community Awareness Sergeant for filing. The Community Awareness Officer may directly approve and coordinate ride-alongs by VIPS. The Shift Commander may directly vet and approve ride-alongs requested by an officer for a family member, friend, or professional contact.

### **Shift Commander's Responsibilities**

The Shift Commander will insure the following:

1. A completed application with a signed waiver is in hand before permitting a ride-along. The consent and signature of a parent or guardian is required for persons under the age of 18 years of age.
2. The observer is properly attired, unarmed (law enforcement officers excepted), issued observer identification, and assigned to an employee with permanent status.
3. The observer is notified that they are strictly an observer and are not authorized to engage in any police activity, unless expressly directed to do so by an officer.
4. Even if cameras or recording devices are cleared, notify the observer that recording images, audio, or video where there is a reasonable expectation of privacy is prohibited.
5. Discuss with the observer and assigned officer what the observer should do if left-off due to the potential hazard of a pending police activity, or they otherwise become separated.
6. Terminate the observer's participation when necessary due to the potential hazard, confidentiality, or sensitivity of pending police activity, the conduct of the observer, or other special circumstances.
7. After completion of the observation period, the application should be routed to the Community Awareness Sergeant for filing.

### **Police Observer Program Rules**

1. Observers shall be under the immediate and direct control of the officer to which they are assigned and must obey that officer's direction at all times.
2. Observers are not to engage in any police activity unless expressly directed to do so by an officer.
3. Observers shall wear an Observer Identification Card and are to be identified upon request as observers. In no way are observers to be identified as having police power.
4. Observers must wear neat, clean, and appropriate clothing. Shorts, sweat suits or jogging suits, tank tops, halter tops, or clothing which is torn, soiled or displays offensive language or symbols shall not be allowed.
5. Participants must wear their seat belts at all times while in police vehicles.

6. Non-City personnel may not operate department vehicles.
7. Participants will not use any drugs or alcohol prior to ride-along.
8. If at any time during an observation period, the responsible officer or Shift Commander determines that it is appropriate to terminate the observer's participation, the observer must immediately comply. In determining if a police observer's participation should be terminated, an officer or Shift Commander should consider the following factors.
  - a. The potential hazard of a pending police activity.
  - b. The confidentiality or sensitivity of pending police activity.
  - c. Conduct of the observer which would tend to jeopardize the safety of an officer or the public.
  - d. Conduct of the observer which detracts significantly from the efficiency or image of the department.
  - e. Failure to comply with a program rule.
  - f. Special circumstances.