

---

S.O.P. #: 400-36

SUBJECT: OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM

DIVISION: EMERGENCY OPERATIONS

---

Objective: To outline the procedures for the Observational Ride-Along Program

The Baltimore County Fire Department's Observational Ride-Along Program is designed to familiarize participants with the complex and unpredictable nature of Emergency Medical Services and Fire Suppression work. Participation in the Baltimore County Fire Department's Observational Ride-Along Program is dependent upon eligibility and requires the approval of the Safety Division or their designee. Participation in the Department's Observational Ride-Along program is a privilege, not a right, that can be revoked at any time. This policy applies to all Baltimore County owned apparatus/vehicles.

#### Section 1: Criteria

- A. Applicants must have a valid reason for requesting an observational ride-along. Such reasons may include enrollment in a Nursing or other Healthcare program, or other relative educational program.
  - a. This does not apply to those persons who are participating in Emergency Medical Services (EMS) internship programs that are governed by contractual agreements.
  - b. Students in EMT and Paramedic courses are not considered an observational ride-along and shall refer to, and follow, the Preceptor guidelines provided by the Baltimore County Fire Rescue Academy (FRA).
- B. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older in order to participate in the Observational Ride-Along Program.
- C. Applicants must possess the physical and cognitive ability to immediately respond to verbal commands given by a fire department member and the ability to provide for their own safety in situations where the fire department member is unable to do so.
- D. Applicants may be excluded if their participation poses a threat to the health/safety of others or themselves.
- E. Participants must receive HIPAA training prior to a ride-along, or provide reasonable proof of their familiarity with confidentiality statutes and requirements, and remains liable for HIPAA compliance.

---

## Section 2: Application Process

- A. Observational Ride-Along applicants
  - a. Applicants shall review the program introduction, rules and prohibitions.
  - b. Applicants must complete, sign, and submit all of the following electronically to the Safety Division via [fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov)
    - i. Observational Ride-Along Application
    - ii. Observational Ride-Along Release, Waiver of Liability and, Indemnification Agreement (“Waiver”).
  - c. Applications must be submitted at least three weeks prior to requested date(s).
  - d. Applications will be reviewed and approved or denied, on a case by case basis.
  - e. Applicants may be subject to a background check.
  - f. Applicants shall have current medical insurance coverage and may be asked to provide proof of coverage.
  - g. Applications can only be approved by the OIC of the Safety Division, or their designee.

## Section 3: Participation Restrictions

- A. The level of participation for each individual will be based upon their individual program requirements. Only one ride-along participant is permitted per apparatus.
- B. Applicants who have been convicted of any of the following crimes may be denied access to a Ride-Along: Felony crime, violent crime, sex crime, identity theft, privacy law breaches. A secondary review is permitted upon request.

## Section 4: Scheduling

- A. Dates and times of the ride-along(s) will be determined based on unit and personnel availability.
- B. Once approved by the Safety Division, or their designee, an email will be sent to the on-duty Division Chief who will determine the station for the ride-along. Scheduling may be delegated to the company commander.
  - a. Note: The OIC of Safety, or their designee, may directly schedule the ride-along. In this case, this will be coordinated with the DC/BC and company commanders will be notified as soon as practicable.
- C. The ride-along(s) will be scheduled for either day shift (0700-1700 hours) or night shift (1700-2300 hours). Actual start and end times may deviate based on call volume.

- 
- D. Approved applicants will be contacted by the designated company commander with a date and time for their ride-along. Participants must promptly report to the scheduled ride-along session.
    - a. Contact information and station location shall be provided to the applicant.
  - E. Applicants will not report for a ride-along if a date and time have not been confirmed.
  - F. With the approval of the on-duty DC/BC, company commanders have the option of limiting or canceling a scheduled ride-along session, as dictated by the needs of their command, in cases such as special events or operational demands. Consideration should be made to reassign the ride-along to a neighboring company prior to cancelling.
  - G. Whenever possible, 24-hour notice of cancellation will be provided by the company commander to scheduled participants and every attempt to promptly reschedule shall be made.

#### Section 5: Program Rules

***PARTICIPATION IN THE OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM IS A PRIVILEGE. COMPLIANCE TO THESE PROGRAM RULES ARE IMPERATIVE, AS THEY ARE INTENDED TO MAKE THE PROGRAM SAFE AND REWARDING FOR ALL INVOLVED.***

- A. Only person(s) approved by the Safety Division, or their designee, are permitted to participate in the ride-along program.
- B. Participants are expected to promptly report for the scheduled ride-along and report to the company commander or EMS Supervisor. When a company commander is not present, station personnel are expected to notify the company commander of the arrival and departure time of the participant.
  - a. Participants shall adhere to healthy check-in procedures upon reporting to their session.
- C. Participants must be dressed in a manner that reflects the Department's image of professionalism.
  - a. Long pants and closed-toed shoes are required.
  - b. Extremes in dress such as tube/tank tops, bare backs/midriiffs, shorts, short skirts, bare feet, sandals, or clothing with obscene language or offensive references are not permitted.
  - c. Religious attire that does not create a safety hazard shall be permitted.

- D. Participants shall be supervised at all times to ensure accountability and avoid freelancing.
- E. Participants must wear a seat belt at all times while in Department vehicles.
- F. Fire Department personnel have the authority to return a participant to the station for inappropriate behavior.
  - a. Anytime a ride-along is terminated or canceled by a field officer, the Safety Division shall be emailed via [fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov) by the officer making the decision with the reason for cancellation/termination before the end of the shift.
- G. Participants may self-terminate their ride-along session at any time and will be transported to the station at the next convenient opportunity.

#### Section 6: Participant Prohibitions

- A. Taking part in or interfering with Fire Department or EMS Operations, regardless of the situation.  
*NOTE: Participants are encouraged to ask questions concerning an incident only after clearing the scene.*
- B. Carrying weapons or look-alike weapons of any kind.
- C. Handling any Department equipment, except in an emergency.
- D. Being intoxicated or under the influence of any illegal or controlled substance.
- E. Carrying or use of tobacco products, including but not limited to smoking or vaping, is prohibited on county property and all county vehicles.
- F. Carrying or use of medicinal marijuana is prohibited on county property and all county vehicles.
- G. Posting or live streaming information concerning departmental activities on social media or internet sites, as this information may be confidential and sensitive.
- H. Using any electronic device to conduct audio or visual recordings or to take photographic images during a ride-along session. Participants will immediately turn off or remove any electronic device upon request. Failure to do so will result in termination of the ride-along session.

- 
- I. Revealing the names or any other identifying information of patients, victims or witnesses, unless required in accordance with law.
  - J. Receiving any compensation for participation in the Ride-Along Program, unless as an approved and recognized scholarship, grant, or regular financial assistance.

#### Section 7: Documentation

- A. The Safety Division, or their designee, will be responsible for the retention of all applications and waivers according to Baltimore County's record retention policies.
- B. Company commanders are responsible for adding the first and last name of the person/member into the notes section of Tele-Staff, attached to the preceptor/OIC of the apparatus.
- C. The first and last name of the person/member on the ride-along shall be included in all medical reports, either in the narrative or listed in the staff section as "other health care provider."

**BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM**

# **BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT**



# **OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM**



## **BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM**

The Baltimore County Fire Department's Observational Ride-Along is designed to familiarize participants with the operations of Emergency Medical Services and Fire Suppression. Participation in the Baltimore County Fire Department's Observational Ride-Along Program is dependent upon eligibility and approval by the OIC of the Safety Division, or their designee. Participation in the Department's Observational Ride-Along program is a privilege not a right that can be revoked at any time.

**Students in EMT and Paramedic courses are not considered an observational ride-along and shall refer to, and follow, the Preceptor guidelines provided by the Baltimore County Fire Rescue Academy (FRA).**

Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Age: The applicant must be an adult (18 years of age).
- Applicants must have a valid reason for requesting an observational ride-along. Such reasons may include being a student of an accredited educational program in which a current Memorandum of Understanding is established with the Baltimore County Fire Department, or otherwise approved by the Director of EMS or OIC of the Safety Division.
- Applicant must possess the physical and cognitive ability to immediately respond to verbal commands given by a fire department member and the ability to provide for their own safety in situations where the fire department member is unable to do so. Applicants may be excluded if their participation poses a threat to the health/safety of others or themselves.
- Applicants must have medical insurance coverage and may be required to provide proof of coverage.

### **IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR APPLICANTS TO CONSIDER**

- It is important to understand that there is inherent risk involved in the daily operations of emergency services. Such risks include, but are not limited to, the exposure to blood borne pathogens, toxic materials, and communicable diseases, as well as exposure to violence and situations that pose moral and ethical challenge.

### **APPLICATION PROCESS FOR AN OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG**

- Applicants must complete and sign the Ride-Along Application and the Ride-Along Release, Waiver of Liability and, Indemnification Agreement. No observational ride-along will be approved for persons under the age of 18. ***These applications are NOT for students in the Student-Preceptor Program. Students in the Student-Preceptor program shall follow the Preceptor Guidelines established and provided by the Baltimore County FRA.***
- Completed and signed applications and waivers must be submitted to the Safety Division via email: [fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov).
- Applications will be reviewed, and approved or denied, on a case by case basis. Applicants may be subject to a background check.



## **BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM**

### **PARTICIPATION RESTRICTIONS**

- Participation for each individual will be based upon their program requirements. Participation will be categorized as either be observational or clinical.
- Only one ride-along participant is permitted at a time per apparatus.
- Applicants who have been convicted of any of the following crimes may be denied access to a Ride-Along: Felony crime, violent crime, sex crime, identity theft, privacy law breaches, you are permitted to a secondary review upon request.

### **OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG SCHEDULING & REPORTING**

- Will be determined based on unit and personnel availability.
- The ride-along will be scheduled for either day shift (0700-1700 hours) or night shift (1700-2300 hours). **NOTE:** Actual start and end times may deviate based on operational demand.
- Approved applicants will be contacted with a date, time and location for the ride-along.
- Participants are expected to promptly report to the scheduled ride-along session. Upon arriving at the station, participants shall report to the company commander. Participants shall adhere to healthy check-in procedures upon reporting to their session.
- Applicants will not report for a ride-along without prior approval by the OIC of the Safety Division or their designee.
- With the approval of the on-duty DC/BC, company commanders or EMS Officers have the option of limiting or canceling a scheduled ride-along session, as dictated by the needs of their command, in cases such as special events or operational demands. Whenever possible, 24-hour notice will be provided to scheduled participants. Consideration should be made to reassign the ride-along to a neighboring company prior to rescheduling.

**QUESTIONS ABOUT THE BALTIMORE COUNTY OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM OR THE APPLICATION PROCESS CAN BE DIRECTED TO THE SAFETY DIVISION: [fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov) or 410-887-7562.**





# BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM APPLICATION

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of any of the following?

Felony crime, violent crime, sex crime, identity theft, or privacy law breaches:  YES  NO

*If yes, you may be denied access to a Ride-Along, you are permitted to a secondary review upon request.*

Do you have any conditions that may impede your ability to safely participate as a ride-along?  YES  NO

If yes, explain: \_\_\_\_\_

Optional Questions: Gender: \_\_\_\_\_ Race: \_\_\_\_\_

---

**EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

---

Have you ever participated in a ride-along with this or any other fire department or EMS agency?  YES  NO

If yes, date of most recent ride-along: \_\_\_\_\_ Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for the request to ride-along in Baltimore County:  STUDENT/FACULTY  OTHER (explain below)

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

PROVIDE THREE DATES AND TIMES OF DAY YOU ARE AVAILABLE. ALLOW AT LEAST THREE WEEKS FOR APPROVAL AND NOTIFICATION. DATES AND TIMES REQUESTED CANNOT BE GUARANTEED.

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** Ride-alongs will be scheduled for either day shift (0700-1700 hours) or night shift (1700-2300 hours). Actual start and end times may deviate based on operational demands.

---

**I, THE UNDERSIGNED, HAVE READ THE PROGRAM RULES AND PARTICIPANT PROHIBITIONS INCLUDED WITH THIS APPLICATION. I AGREE TO ABIDE BY THE PROGRAM RULES, AND PARTICIPANT PROHIBITIONS AND TO HAVE MY RIDE-ALONG SESSION TERMINATED AT ANY TIME SHOULD I VIOLATE THEM.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
(APPLICANT SIGNATURE)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(DATE)

---

**FIRE DEPARTMENT USE ONLY  
TO BE COMPLETED BY SAFETY DIVISION:**

Ride-Along Release, Waiver of Liability and Indemnification Agreement, signed?  YES  NO

APPROVED - Type:  Observational  Clinical

NOT APPROVED - Justification for denial shall be documented on a form 58 and maintained as part of the application file

Authorizing Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ ID#: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time of ride-along: \_\_\_\_\_

Rider will report to: (person, station assignment and station phone number): \_\_\_\_\_

---

---



## **BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM RULES AND PROHIBITIONS**

***PARTICIPATION IN THE RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM IS A PRIVILEGE. COMPLIANCE TO THESE PROGRAM RULES ARE IMPERATIVE, AS THEY ARE INTENDED TO MAKE THE PROGRAM SAFE AND REWARDING FOR ALL INVOLVED.***

### **Program Rules**

- A. Participants are expected to promptly report for the scheduled ride-along and report to the company commander or EMS Supervisor. When a company commander is not present, station personnel are expected to notify the company commander of the arrival and departure time of the participant.
- B. Participants must be dressed in a manner that reflects the Department's image of professionalism.
  - a. Long pants and closed-toed shoes are required.
  - b. Extremes in dress such as tube/tank tops, bare backs/midribs, shorts, short skirts, bare feet, sandals, or clothing with obscene language or offensive references are not permitted.
  - c. Religious attire that does not create a safety hazard shall be permitted.
- C. Participants must wear a seat belt at all times while in Department vehicles.
- D. Fire Department personnel have the authority to return a participant to the station for inappropriate behavior.
  - a. Anytime a ride-along is terminated or canceled by a field officer, the Safety Division shall be emailed via [fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:fire-safety@baltimorecountymd.gov) by the officer making the decision with the reason for cancellation/termination before the end of the shift.
- E. Participants may self-terminate their ride-along session at any time and will be transported to the station at the next convenient opportunity.
- F. Participants must receive HIPAA training prior to a ride-along, or provide reasonable proof of their familiarity with confidentiality statutes and requirements, and remains liable for HIPAA compliance.

### **Participant Prohibitions**

- A. Taking part in or interfering with Fire Department or EMS Operations, regardless of the situation.  
***NOTE:*** Participants are encouraged to ask questions concerning an incident only after clearing the scene.



## **BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG PROGRAM RULES AND PROHIBITIONS**

- B. Carrying weapons or look-alike weapons of any kind.
- C. Handling any Department equipment, except in an emergency.
- D. Being intoxicated or under the influence of any illegal or controlled substance.
- E. Use, including but not limited to smoking and vaping, or carrying of tobacco products is prohibited on county property and all county vehicles.
- F. Carrying or use of medicinal marijuana is prohibited on county property and all county vehicles.
- G. Posting or live streaming information concerning departmental activities on social media or internet sites, as this information may be confidential and sensitive.
- H. Using any electronic device to conduct audio or visual recordings or to take photographic images during a ride-along session. Participants will immediately turn off or remove any electronic device upon request. Failure to do so will result in termination of the ride-along session.
- I. Revealing the names or any other identifying information of patients, victims or witnesses, unless required in accordance with law.
- J. Receiving any compensation for participation in the Ride-Along Program, unless as an approved and recognized scholarship, grant, or regular financial assistance.



## **BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG RIDE ALONG RELEASE, WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT (“WAIVER”)**

*\*This is a Legal Document – Do not sign unless you fully understand the terms and conditions contained herein.*

*\*This form MUST be completed and submitted with the Ride-Along application.*

I, \_\_\_\_\_, am a competent adult of at least eighteen (18) years of age. I am a voluntary participant, who wishes to participate in the Baltimore County Fire Department’s Observational Ride-Along Program, which provides the opportunity to observe and/or to pursue training and/or education in emergency medical services, to enter upon and ride certain firefighting and/or ambulance apparatus of Baltimore County, in response to an actual alarm or fire or drill, and to attend various training classes which may contain a clinical component (“Ride-Along Program”). In consideration for being allowed to participate in the Observational Ride-Along Program, I hereby, on behalf of myself, and all respective heirs, estate, successors, family, personal representatives and assigns, affirm and agree to the following:

I understand and hereby acknowledge the existence of and assume full responsibility for the dangers and risks associated with my participation in the Observational Ride-Along Program, and acknowledge that Baltimore County, Maryland, Baltimore County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management, Baltimore County Fire Department, and any other agency or unit of government, or entity of Baltimore County participating in the Observational Ride-Along Program (“Baltimore County”), and all of their respective agents, employees, contractors, successors and assigns, shall not be responsible for any and all property damage or bodily injury (including serious physical injury, emotional trauma, or even death) incurred by me as a result of my participation in the Observational Ride-Along Program, whether foreseen or unforeseen. In assuming all risks, I further attest and understand there are many different dangers involved in emergency medical services, emergency services and ride-along work and participation in the Observational Ride-Along Program. The risk of becoming infected with fatal and non-fatal infectious diseases such as, but not limited to, HIV virus, Hepatitis, TB, and many other infectious diseases are very possible. I understand that I may come into contact with any or all of the diseases through, airborne exposure, contact with blood and other body fluids. I understand that Baltimore County doesn’t provide protective clothing and equipment for non-staff members; and the protective equipment we provide our staff is not intended for the use of non-staff members but may be provided in Baltimore County’s discretion with no warranties express or implied as to its efficacy. There are substantial risk and dangers involved in participation in the Ride-Along Program. I further certify that I am cognizant of all of the inherent dangers of participating in the Ride-Along Program or in riding with or in an ambulance or fire suppression apparatus and of the basic safety rules for activities connected therewith and knowingly assume all risks. The inherent dangers associated with riding with such ambulance crews or participating in activities providing emergency services includes, but is not limited to, accidents involving the ambulance, negligent or intentional tortuous acts by third persons, exposure to communicable diseases, and various accidents during the provision of emergency medical treatment.

I understand and agree to notify Baltimore County prior to my participation in the Ride-Along Program if I have any health concerns or medical conditions before or during participation in the Ride-Along Program that may impair in any manner whatsoever my ability to participate in the Ride-Along Program; and I understand and agree to follow any directions, orders, advice or information given during the Ride-Along Program by Baltimore County with regard to the conduct of the Ride-Along Program. I further assume full responsibility for any and all property damage or bodily injury that results directly or indirectly from my own failure to do so; and I understand and agree that participation in the Ride-Along Program does not



**BALTIMORE COUNTY FIRE DEPARTMENT  
OBSERVATIONAL RIDE-ALONG RIDE ALONG RELEASE, WAIVER  
OF LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT (“WAIVER”)**

create an employment or joint venture relationship of any and all kinds between Baltimore County and myself and I am not entitled to employment benefits of any kinds including, but not limited to workers compensation and that Baltimore County is not receiving any consideration, pecuniary or otherwise, and that my participation is solely for my benefit; and I hereby forever release and discharge Baltimore County and forever waive my right to initiate, make or file any claim, cause of action, or legal proceeding whether now known or later discovered, including but not limited to, any and all loss, liability, damage, claim, cost or expense incurred by me, as a result of, or arising out of or in connection with, my participation in the Ride-Along Program, whether caused by the acts or omissions of Baltimore County, directly or indirectly, and including but not limited to, the acts or omissions of other participants or non-participants in the Ride-Along Program, including, but not limited to medical, personal injury, death, property damage, or tort claims or suits. In the event that a demand or claim, whether groundless or otherwise, is made against Baltimore County arising from or based on my participation or actions in the Ride-Along Program, I agree to indemnify Baltimore County for all damages, attorney fees and costs incurred in defending said demand or claim.

I further state that I understand the terms herein are contractual and not a mere recital, and that I have signed this document as my own free act. I hereby acknowledge that I fully understand the consequences of this Waiver and that it is a voluntary and intelligent act on my part. I understand that it is not the purpose of the Ride-Along Program to teach me emergency medical or response procedures, nor is it the function of the ambulance/fire/rescue service to serve as the guardians of my safety. I affirm that I have fully informed myself of the contents of this Waiver by reading it before I have signed it. I affirm that I am fit and capable of performing all tasks as contemplated by the Ride-Along program for participants, students, observers and riders such as myself.

I, the undersigned also acknowledge that if any single provision of this Waiver is declared unenforceable that such declaration has no effect on the enforce ability of the remainder of the Waiver nor does it render it illusory or invalid.

I HEREBY CERTIFY AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I HAVE THOROUGHLY READ AND FULLY UNDERSTAND THIS ACKNOWLEDGEMENT, RELEASE, WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION AGREEMENT (“WAIVER”).

Participant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed) (Signature) (Date)