


POLICY 106.5	OBSERVER RIDING PROCEDURES	
	REVISED: 1/93, 10/07, 06/11, 12/13, 05/23	RELATED POLICIES:
	CFA STANDARDS: 14.15	REVIEWED: AS NEEDED

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to create guidelines for the control and administration of requests to ride as observers with members of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department.

B. POLICY

The Fort Lauderdale Police Department recognizes the educational benefit in allowing observers to ride with non-probationary officers and detectives. Observers will be required to adhere to the guidelines and criteria established in this policy.

C. DEFINITIONS

1. Non-Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) Security Certified

Any individual, to include an existing law enforcement employee, who has not met the two-fold FDLE requirement of:

- a. Passing a criminal history check in accordance with the procedures outlined below, and
- b. Taking and passing the CJIS security awareness course appropriate to the individuals expected level of exposure to protected CJI in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

2. CJIS Security Certified

- a. Any individual who has taken the FCIC/NCIC certification course and maintained their certification as “current” is presumed to be CJIS qualified.
- b. Any individual hired by the Fort Lauderdale Police Department, or any observer who is a current new-hire employee from another law enforcement agency, whose initial training will include FCIC/NCIC certification, is covered by the “six-month rule” that allows exposure based on having passed a background check and the intent to certify.

3. Citizen Observer

Any non-CJIS security certified individual requesting the opportunity to access, interact, and observe agency personnel in the performance of their duties, thereby exposing that citizen to CJI.

4. **Ride-Along**

Any non-CJIS security certified individual requesting the opportunity to observe the operations of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department by riding with members of the Fort Lauderdale Police Department.

D. PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

1. Observers must be at least eighteen (18) years of age, and meet one of the following:
 - a. Currently enrolled in a Criminal Justice Program.
 - b. Currently enrolled in a Citizen on Patrol or Community Forum program conducted by the FLPD.
 - c. Have an articulable benefit to the Police Department as determined by the Chief of Police, or designee.
 - d. Must have expressed an interest in employment with the Fort Lauderdale Police Department as demonstrated by one of the following:
 - (1). Submission of an application for a sworn position.
 - (2). Active-duty military personnel with an expressed interest in the Department without application for a sworn position
2. All observers will be required to submit to an NCIC/FCIC wants/warrants check prior to riding as an observer.
3. All observers will be required to submit to a Live Scan fingerprint criminal history check prior to riding as an observer. The Live Scan is in the Department's lobby area. Any pending/unresolved felony charges or felony conviction will disqualify the observer. Observers will not be allowed entry into Records/Teletype prior to or during a background check.
4. All non-CJIS security certified observers shall take and pass the CJIS security awareness course appropriate to the individual's expected level of exposure to protected CJI prior to taking part in observer activities. Results of successfully taking and passing the CJIS security awareness course are valid for two (2) years.
5. All observers will be required to always display an ID card on their outer clothing while riding as an observer. This ID card will identify the observer to other police officers and the public. The ID cards will be maintained in Property Control and signed out by the officer/detective assigned to the observer. The officer/detective will be responsible for the return of the ID card to Property Control.
6. All observers will be required to be attired in appropriate dress. Collared shirt and slacks are suggested. Tee shirts, shorts, leggings, and other inappropriate clothing are prohibited. Permission to ride as an observer may be withdrawn by a supervisor if the observer is dressed inappropriately.

7. All observers will remain under the direct supervision of the assigned officer/detective. Observers will remain in the vehicle unless authorized by the officer/detective to exit the vehicle. As permitted under F.S.S. 901.18, police officers making lawful arrests may command the aid of persons he/she deems necessary to make the arrest. However, observers will not take active roles in the apprehension of suspects unless circumstances dictate that the offender will be able to successfully resist the arrest without such aid. Observers are prohibited from taking an active role in in-progress calls or the searching of suspects. Observers are prohibited from entering crime scenes without the consent of a supervisor. Observers will not handle evidence or establish any dialog with suspects, witnesses, arrestees, or victims. Any violation by the observer can result in the immediate termination of the authorization to ride as an observer. Termination of authorization can be initiated by any supervisor.
8. Civilian observers shall not be permitted to carry or possess a firearm or weapon with them during the period they are riding, regardless of any permits or licenses they may hold.

E. APPROVAL PROCESS

1. Upon receipt of a ride-along request, it will be routed to the Station Report Unit Sergeant for proper review and dissemination.
2. Permission MUST be obtained at least two (2) days in advance from the Shift Lieutenant of the district or the captain of the unit in which the observer wishes to ride. A completed "Request for Permission to Ride as an Observer" form must be submitted at that time.

F. OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

1. The assigned officer is responsible for the safety and immediate supervision of the observer, aware that the observer will be expecting information and direction.
2. Officers assigned an observer will advise Regional Communications that an observer will be riding with them prior to engaging in police activity.
3. Officers/detectives responding to in-progress calls for service may:
 - a. Direct the observer to remain with or in the vehicle, or
 - b. Drop the observer off at an open and well-lit place of business. If the officer/detective chooses this option, they will immediately notify Regional Communications of the situation and a supervisor or other officer will be dispatched to collect the observer and transport them to headquarters.

G. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Sergeants or higher authority will complete the NCIC/FCIC background check.

2. The Desk Sergeant will coordinate with prospective observers to inform them of available times and location to conduct the Live Scan fingerprint criminal history check.
3. Once the Live Scan is completed and approved, a CJIS testing account will be created by an Agency CJIS test administrator and the observer will be sent a link to the CJIS Level 1 test.
4. Sergeants or higher authority will verify that all non-CJIS security certified observers have taken and passed the CJIS security awareness course appropriate to the individual's expected level of exposure to protected CJI prior to taking part in observer activities.
5. If the CJIS test is successfully completed and the observer is in possession of the CJIS Level 1 certificate, the observer will contact the Desk Sergeant to schedule the ride-along.
6. The Desk Sergeant will ensure that the Request for Permission to Ride as an Observer and Hold Harmless/Indemnity Agreement form is completed by the observer and that all observers receive a copy of the Instructions and Rules.
7. Observers will be assigned to non-probationary officers/detectives on a volunteer basis, when possible. During the two (2) day advance notice, every effort will be made to assign the observer to a shift/area which both satisfies the need/objective of the observation and assists in locating a volunteer officer. If volunteers are not located, observers will be assigned by supervisors.
8. On the date of the ride-along, a supervisor shall ensure that the observer is in fact the person authorized to ride and conduct a new NCIC/FCIC wants/warrants check.
9. On the date of the ride-along, the Shift Lieutenant will evaluate the NCIC/FCIC results, criminal history review and CJIS certificate to determine if the observer meets the requirements of the observer rider program.
10. Once approved by the Shift Lieutenant, the Request for Permission to Ride as an Observer and Hold Harmless/Indemnity Agreement, NCIC/FCIC and criminal history review will be forwarded to the appropriate briefing sergeant.
11. Once the observer is assigned, the briefing sergeant will forward all observer related paperwork to the Desk Sergeant for digital tracking and record keeping purposes.
12. The Desk Sergeant shall maintain a digital spreadsheet containing the names of observers and their ride-along date(s). Once the ride-along is completed, the Desk Sergeant will notify the CJIS test administrator to have the observer's CJIS testing account and Live Scan record deactivated.

H. LIMITATIONS

1. Observers are limited to one ride in any six-month period. Exceptions may be granted by a lieutenant or higher authority for reasonable cause. Examples include, but are not

limited to prospective employees, homeowner association members, student interns, educational projects, or surveys.

2. Members of Department employee's family are prohibited from riding as an observer with that employee but may be assigned to ride with other officers/detectives.
3. Any deviation from the established criteria and procedures of this policy must be with the authorization of a captain or higher authority.

