

Tempe Fire Department Policies and Procedures
Citizen Observer/Ride-Along Program
308.02
Rev 7-31-08

The Citizen Observer Program permits interested citizens to observe Tempe Fire Department operations by riding in a fire truck or in a command vehicle. This program is intended for family members of department personnel, city officials, members of the press, visiting fire personnel from other cities, appropriate members of the medical community, and on a limited basis to the general public. Department members may not obligate the department to charitable ride-alongs without approval of the Fire Chief. Participants in charity ride-alongs must meet all the stipulations of this policy. Citizens that are handicapped in a manner that may cause a delay in emergency response or create a safety hazard for the citizen or the fire crew may be prevented from participating in this program. Reasonable accommodations will be made when possible to allow the ride-along to occur. If unable to accommodate the ride-along, other information or tours will be provided if the citizen is interested.

Observers will not be accommodated when the Federal Homeland Security Threat is at condition Orange, or higher. Additionally, observers will not be accommodated during Tier-Two or Tier-Three Civil Disturbance response. (See 209.05)

Observers must be at least 18 years old. Scheduling of citizen observers and official observers will be handled by the District Manager (or Duty Chief when necessary) and will take into account unit staffing and scheduled activities.

No member of the general public will be scheduled to ride more than once annually. The hours available for the general public to participate in the citizen observer program will be between 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Observers will be advised that emergency activity may delay the return to quarters beyond 10:00 p.m. Exceptions to these hours will be at the discretion of the duty chief. Observers are restricted to one at a time per station.

All citizen observers are required to go to Fire Administration in person and fill out the information form for Citizen Observers. A copy of the interested observer's driver's license will be made. This information will be forwarded to the District Manager in charge of ride-alongs for processing. A background check will be conducted, and if the individual passes, they will be contacted by a member of the Fire Department to schedule their ride-along. The District Manager will then forward the request to a fire company at which time the company officer will make contact with the interested person to schedule the ride-along.

The company officer will brief the observer on the Fire Department's expectations for the riding period and assure that the observer is aware of dress code requirements and all safety requirements such as seat belts, vests, and their whereabouts at all times. A safety "Observer" vest will be assigned to the observer to be worn as required by departmental procedures. The company officer will explain to the observer the appropriate action to follow should the entire crew be away from the apparatus during a major incident or an incident in which the observer is prohibited from being in the immediate area (hazardous or potentially hazardous areas). Due to the sensitive nature of some EMS calls, the observer may be required to stay with the apparatus, and in no case will be allowed to enter a private residence. It is our intention to insure that the observer have the opportunity to observe the incident whenever possible, but we must not allow the observer access to a sensitive EMS situation that could embarrass the observer, the patient, or the patient's family or put the observer in danger. At the Captain's discretion an observer may not be allowed to respond on a particular incident.

Seatbelts must be worn at all times by the observer when riding in a fire apparatus during a ride-along.

Citizen observers are required to conduct themselves in a manner that will not interfere with Fire Department operations. Observers are expected to act and dress in a manner that reflects a positive image on the Fire Department.

The company officer is responsible for ensuring that observers are appropriately attired. Shorts, dresses, cutoffs, tank tops, low rise jeans, and sandals are some of the items that are not allowed. Closed toed shoes (tennis shoes, etc.) are required to be worn during the ride-along. Clothing with pictures, logos, advertising, etc. are

prohibited. Any observer failing to meet the appropriate dress requirements or failing to conduct themselves appropriately will be asked to leave the station and may be excluded from any future observer opportunities.

Due to the nature of emergency operations, an observer may be witness to confidential patient information. By signing the waiver, the observer agrees to protect this information as confidential and protected by State and Federal law. In an effort to ensure patient privacy, cell phones and cameras may not be carried by citizen observers during the ride-along.