

Ride Along Policy

Purpose

To establish a standard for the Penn Hills No.7 VFC Ride-Along /Observation Program. The Penn Hills No.7 VFC encourages community involvement in the operation of the Fire Department. This allows interested citizens and student interns to ride as observers with the fire department personnel for legitimate civic or educational reasons. The program is to provide potential live-ins, the public and students the opportunity to observe activities in the Fire and Rescue field to gain a better understanding of the duties and responsibilities for emergency services personnel.

The Ride-Along program shall be regulated through the Penn Hills No.7 VFC Board of Directors.

Policy

It is the responsibility of the Fire Chief or his designee to ensure all non-department personnel have complied with the Department's Ride-Along program requirements prior to riding on department apparatus. This includes the completion of the Ride-Along application, waiver of liability, and HIPPA/Rules participant agreement.

Non-department personnel are those individuals who are not affiliated within the Penn Hills No.7 VFC system. It is the responsibility of the Fire Chief, or his designee, to approve all requests prior to non-department personnel riding on department apparatus. Individuals interested in riding-along on department apparatus who are under the age of 18 shall also obtain a parent or guardian signature on the waiver and must have a public service or agency affiliation (sponsor) to participate in the program. Examples include, but are not limited to, High Schools job shadowing, Fire / Rescue class enrollment, work experience, or occupational training programs, etc.

Other than student participants are to act only as observers unless directed by the Fire Chief, or his designee.

Procedural Guidelines

1. Eligible Participants

1. All persons wishing to participate in the ride-along program must be pre-approved by the Fire Chief or designee.
2. Participants must be 16 years of age or older and have no physical limitations of a nature which would jeopardize the safety of the individual or others.

2. Approval and Assignment Process

1. All requests for riding on department apparatus should be made in writing to the Fire Chief and or his designee, utilizing the Department Ride-Along application. Any request

should be submitted as far in advance as possible, at minimum five business days prior to the requested ride-along date.

2. Upon approval, the individual will be required to read and sign the Ride-Along Program HIPPA Privacy Agreement, Waiver of Liability and Rules of Conduct forms for the period the individual will be riding.
3. The original signed forms shall be maintained on file with the Administrative Secretary. A copy of the forms shall be forwarded to the appropriate station commander.
4. The Fire Chief and or his designee shall be responsible for the placement of the participant and ensure each ride-along/observer receives a safety briefing on general Safety guidelines, Infection Control, patient confidentiality and has an understanding of Rules of Conduct.
5. The fire department administration will maintain all records relating to the ride-along program, to include the original request and release forms of all ride-along participants for two years.

3. Participant Restrictions and Responsibilities

1. Ride-Along Hours/Standards

1. Emergency service observation is a twenty-four (24) hour operation. Observation hours shall be 0000 – 2400 hours.
2. Ride-Along/Observer(s) on the night tour; the observer will utilize the “Bunk-In” room for sleeping. After your observation has ended, you are required to remove the mattress sheets and put sheets in hamper/laundry basket.
3. Ride-Along/observer(s) are limited to the following Ride-Along(s) per year:
 - General Ride-Along/Observer – One (1) every six (6) months
 - Emergency Service Personnel – Four (4) per year
 - Collegiate Mentoring Programs – Four (4) per year
 - EMS Students – Evaluated according to student needs and requirements.

This time limit may be waived for the purposes of student / provider awareness. The Department has the authority to approve or deny any request for participation in this program, or alter such request in the best interest of the department. Students enrolled in an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) class will be given special consideration.

4. With the exception of limited EMS awareness, Ride-Along participants shall act as observers, that is, they must not become physically or verbally involved in an incident, unless directed to by Fire Chief, or his designee.

5. Ride-Along/observer(s) shall not attempt to assist firefighters with any aspect of routine duties or emergency operations. Observer(s) shall remain in cab during initial stages of any firefighting activity to eliminate impeding operations and safety concerns.
6. Under no circumstances will a Ride-Along/observer be permitted to enter a building that is on fire.
7. The Officer in Charge (OIC), or designee, shall take reasonable care to prevent the ride-along/observer from becoming physically involved in or assisting in the following types of incidents:
 - Crime Scenes
 - Violent patients
 - Patients with known infectious diseases
 - Fireground operations
 - Situations involving or likely to involve the display or use of firearms
 - Other activities or situations that is likely to increase the participant's risk or exposure.
8. If the OIC, or designee, receives a potentially hazardous call or realizes they may become immediately involved in a potentially hazardous situation, the ride-along/observer should be instructed to remain in the apparatus. It is acceptable to leave the individual at the fire station.
9. Student/Observer under the direction of the officer in charge may assist crew members as needed with minor cleaning, re-stocking of supplies and carrying equipment to and from incidents.
10. Failure to follow the directions of the OIC or designee, Rules of Conduct, fire department policies and procedures will result in removal of the privilege to participate as a Ride-Along/Observer.

2. Dress and Appearance

1. Ride-Along/Observer shall be neat and clean in appearance. Their personal hygiene and grooming must be acceptable to the Fire Chief, or his designee. While participating in the Ride-Along Program, the Rider is, in effect, representing the Penn Hills No.7 VFC.
2. Ride-Along/Observer shall wear suitable attire. Dark pants and light plain shirts are recommended (no jeans). No writing or artwork is allowed on clothing, except small brand logos are acceptable. The following clothing items are prohibited: open toe shoes, sandals, high heels, shorts, tank tops, garments with offensive messages, garments that are excessively loose, and/or excessive loose jewelry with the exception of a ring and a watch.

3. Ride-Along/Observer must wear flat, closed-toe shoes (steel-toed is strongly recommended).
4. Jacket: Dark solid color recommended.
5. Ride-alongs from agencies outside of the Penn hills No.7 VFC may wear their agency uniform with prior approval of the departments fire chief. Student ride-alongs may wear their class uniforms with prior approval.
6. Hair: Long hair shall be pulled back and tied so as not to interfere with activities.

3. Rules of Conduct

1. No firearms or other weapons may be brought onto department property or carried during the ride along.
2. No alcoholic beverages or drugs are to be brought onto Penn Hills No.7 VFC property nor consumed prior to the ride. The smell of alcoholic beverages or marijuana, etc., on the breath will prohibit you from participating.
3. Participants shall wear a seat belt as per State Law and department policy.
4. Participants shall carry a valid Driver's license or identification with them during the ride along at all times.
5. At no time will observers be permitted to take pictures, use a video camera or any other audio-visual recording device while on the scene of an incident. Requests for media ride-alongs will be dealt with separately through the Fire Chief.
6. Ride-Along/Observer(s) will treat private health information as strictly confidential. Disclosure of private health information outside of the organizations who are working with the patient is strictly forbidden. No response documents or copies, on which individually identifiable information such as name, address, SSN, etc shall be removed, disclosed or transmitted off site.
7. Use of tobacco products is not permitted in any station or vehicle.
8. Ride-Along Participants will be responsible for bringing his/her own meals.