

	ELGIN POLICE DEPARTMENT 151 Douglas Avenue Elgin, Illinois 60120	
Effective Date: 10/08/01	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE	Revised Date: 07/31/14
Chief of Police: 	Observer Program, 45.3	
Cross Reference:	Policy Sections: 45.3.1 Observer Program 45.3.2 Processing and Approval or Denial 45.3.3 Information Desk Officer Responsibilities 45.3.4 Shift Supervisors' Responsibilities 45.3.5 Patrol Officers' Responsibilities	

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the policies, procedures, and components of the observer program.

POLICY STATEMENT

It shall be the policy of the Elgin Police Department that persons who are not elected officials or employees of the City of Elgin shall not be permitted to ride in a police department motor vehicle, other than for official police business or in accordance with this standard operating procedure. The department recognizes the value of allowing citizens to ride in police department vehicles, including increasing officer awareness to citizen attitudes and increasing citizenry awareness of police functions. The police department also recognizes that there are certain dangers inherent in riding in a police department vehicle. Therefore, the department hereby adopts these requirements for allowing citizens to ride in police department vehicles.

PROCEDURES

45.3.1 OBSERVER PROGRAM

- A. The Observer Program shall be coordinated by members of the Community Relations/Crime Prevention (CR/CP) Unit. Citizens interested in participating shall obtain the Observer Form from CR/CP or a shift supervisor. Citizens 18 years of age and older shall be issued the Adult Observer Form, while citizens 16 and 17 years of age shall be issued the Juvenile Observer Parental Consent Form to be signed by the juveniles parent/guardian. Both observer forms include a waiver and release of liability approved by corporation counsel.
- B. Observers are allowed to ride for a maximum of four hours, once a year, during the hours of 0630-2245.
- C. The chief of police or designee may make exceptions to the above restrictions.

45.3.2 PROCESSING AND APPROVAL OR DENIAL

- A. The Community Relations/Crime Prevention Unit is responsible for the following:
 1. Provide citizens with the appropriate observer form.
 2. Confirm the citizen's identity through photo identification.
 3. Contact communications for a warrant check and criminal history information, and conduct a LERMS and RMS inquiry of the citizen.
 - a. Citizens may be denied participation in the Observer Program based on the following, but not limited to:

1. Violation of program rules.
 2. Presence of felony convictions.
 3. Misdemeanor arrests or convictions occurring within the last 3 years.
 4. Warrants exist for the citizen.
 5. Involved, at any level, in a current criminal investigation.
 6. Exhibits obvious erratic behavior.
 7. Does not exercise proper personal hygiene.
 8. Dressed inappropriately.
 9. Under the age of 16.
 10. Employee has knowledge indicating that to allow the citizen to ride would not be in the best interest of the department.
- b. Citizens who are refused participation in the program are to be informed of the reason for the denial. The sergeant assigned to the Community Relations/Crime Prevention Unit shall be notified of the reason(s) for the denial.
 - c. A citizen who has been denied for any reason, other than a felony conviction may reapply one year after his or her original request.
4. Approved forms are to be signed by a community relations/crime prevention specialist or sworn supervisor.
 5. Citizens are to be assigned dates and times at least three days in advance, while not assigning more than one citizen per shift (not applicable to interns).
 6. Provide the citizen with the Observer Guidelines Form and if possible, a copy of the completed Observer Form for the citizen to bring to the information desk on the day they will be riding.
 7. Place the original copy of the Observer Form in the appropriate shift's binder located in the report writing area.
 8. Maintain a record system to include a list of the dates and times an observer rode along. Denials will be filed under last name, with the reason for the denial and the name of the person that denied the ride-along.

45.3.3 INFORMATION DESK OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

When a citizen comes to the information desk with an Observer Form, the information desk officer shall confirm that the citizen has an authorized Observer Form and confirm the citizen's identity through photo identification. If the Observer Form is complete, the information desk officer shall advise the shift supervisor that an observer has arrived.

45.3.4 SHIFT SUPERVISORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Check the appropriate shift binder for authorized Observer Forms.

- B. Assign the observer to an officer. Observers shall be placed with the assigned officer in a timely manner, as practical.
- C. If possible, specific requests to ride with certain officers should be honored.
- D. A shift supervisor may refuse to honor the Observer Form. The shift supervisor shall provide written notification to the sergeant assigned to the Community Relations/Crime Prevention Unit detailing the reasons for the denial.

45.3.5 PATROL OFFICERS' RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The officer who has been assigned to the observer shall sign the Observer Form and confirm the observer's identity through photo identification. The officer shall ensure that the observer has signed the form. The completed form is to be placed in the Community Relations/Crime Prevention Unit's mailbox.
- B. Officers shall familiarize the observer with equipment in the vehicle and give general instructions, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Instruction in the operation of police radio equipment.
 - 2. Use of seat belt - The observer shall be secured with the seat belt at all times while in the police vehicle.
 - 3. Observers should be advised that they may be called to testify to incidents they witness.
 - 4. Observers shall be informed that hazardous situations may present themselves at any time. Observers must respond to the assigned officer's command immediately. It should be stressed that this obedience is necessary for the safety of everyone.
- C. Officers should encourage observers who witness incidents to follow the case through its entirety.
- D. Where appropriate, officers should include observers in reports of incidents as witnesses.
- E. The assigned officer shall use their best judgment when allowing the observer to follow them outside of the patrol vehicle on calls; the safety of the observer shall be a priority.
- F. The Observer Program is a good opportunity for the department to facilitate positive community relationships. The assigned officer shall represent the department in a professional and courteous manner.