



Observer Ride-Along Program SOG		
Sections: Admissions / Ops		
Approved by:	 EMS Deputy Chief	
Effective Date: 02/18/2022	Revision Date:	

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) is to foster awareness and recruitment opportunities for the Department of Emergency Medical Services (VBEMS), the Volunteer Rescue Squads and the Marine Rescue Team (MRT), collectively known as VBRescue, by establishing authorization criteria for safety and security to honor requests for an observer ride-along opportunity.

SCOPE

This SOG shall apply to all non-VBRescue individuals and volunteer applicants with approved background checks and recruits who request authorization to participate in a ride-along as an observer on an ambulance or with the Marine Rescue Team operating under the authority of the Department of Emergency Medical Services.

REFERENCES AND RELATED DOCUMENTS

[VBRescue Observer Video](#)

[City of Virginia Beach "Social Media Administrative Directive" 2.15](#)

[City of Virginia Beach Notice of Privacy Practices](#)

[VBEMS Photographic, Video Graphic, Audio & Digital Reproduction Policy](#)

DEFINITIONS

AIC: Attendant in Charge of ambulance crew.

Approved Volunteer Applicant: An individual who has submitted an online application and successfully passed the OEMS criminal background check.

BLS: Basic Life Support.

Confidentiality: Strict requirement for observer to not reveal information seen or heard during a ride-along.

Criminal Background Check: Process by which Virginia Beach Police Department or the Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services obtains fingerprints of a non-applicant or volunteer approved applicant to determine if any criminal history exists that may disqualify the requester.

EMS Supervisor: On duty EMS-1, EMS-2, or EMS Chief-10.

Licensure: The EMS department's electronic personnel management software.

Marine Rescue Team (MRT): Volunteer organization authorized by the Department of EMS to respond to water related emergencies.

Non-Member: A citizen without an application in process at the time they submit the inquiry form.

Observer: A non-member of EMS, approved volunteer applicant or recruit who has been authorized and scheduled to ride along with EMS personnel to gain first-hand knowledge and understanding of the department's operations.

Observer Availability Form: An online form that is submitted by a requester to provide several dates/times of availability to be scheduled for a ride-along shift.

Observer Inquiry Form: Online form completed and submitted to the department by a requester interested in a ride-along with VBEMS.

Observer Ride-Along Attire: Required clothing of dark or khaki color pants (no leggings, joggers, jeans or sweatpants), non-logo'd collared shirt, department issued observer vest and observer ID badge.

Observer Shift: The time an individual attends a ride-along with VBRescue.
Ride-along shifts are: 8:00am-4:00pm or 3:00pm-11:00pm or 7:00pm-11:00pm

Observer Video: A VBEMS video that explains what is, and is not, expected and acceptable during a ride-along.

OSCAR: The online VBRescue personnel scheduling program.

Recruit: Approved applicant registered for and awaiting start EMT Academy or Specialty Team assignment

Requester: A non-member of VBRescue, volunteer applicant with an approved background check or recruit who seeks to be an observer by submitting the online Observer Inquiry form.

Ride-Along Authorization: Approval for an individual to be an observer.

VBRescue: Collectively, the Department of Emergency Medical Services, the ten Volunteer Rescue Squads, the Marine Rescue Team and Support Services Team

Volunteer Rescue Squad: An independent organization of volunteer personnel and equipment authorized by VBEMS to respond to 911 emergencies for the treatment and transportation of sick or injured individuals.

GUIDELINES

1. When deemed in the best interest of VBRescue by the EMS Chief, or designee, a non-member, or volunteer applicant with approved background checks may be scheduled as an observer for a ride-along shift (as defined above) upon successful completion of this SOG.
2. The scheduling of a ride-along shall be at least seventy-two (72) hours after authorization is obtained and in accordance with this SOG.
3. For the safety of crews, citizens, patients and observers, no individual shall be approved by any member of VBRescue to participate as a ride-along observer without authorization pursuant to this SOG, unless approval is in writing and in advance by the EMS Chief, an EMS Deputy Chief or EMS Division Chief.
4. Repeat observer ride-along requests by the same individual (*except a Recruit, see §5.3*) may be honored with approval from the EMS Chief or EMS Deputy Chief one additional time **after** a period of twelve (12) consecutive calendar months from the initial ride-along date and after completing the guidelines at that time.
5. Requester must be at least eighteen (18) years of age.

PROCEDURE

1.0 Beginning The Process

- 1.1 Requestor begins the authorization process by completing an Observer Inquiry Form located on the department's website under the "JOIN" tab.
- 1.2. Once completed, the form is sent to VBRescueObserver@vbgov.com to begin the processing procedures.
- 1.3. The Volunteer Admissions Coordinator, or designee, will access the VBRescueObserver@vbgov.com email account daily during the workweek to obtain submitted inquiries.

2.0 Upon receipt of an Observer Inquiry Form

In all cases below, the goal of the department's Volunteer Admissions Coordinator will be to contact the requester within two (2) business days:

- 2.1 For a non-member applicant:

- 2.1.1 Provide information and instructions regarding the criminal background check.
 - 2.1.2. Remind the requester that ride-alongs are **daily 8:00am-4:00pm or 3:00pm-11:00pm or 7:00pm-11:00pm and only by pre-scheduled authorization.**
 - 2.1.3. Remind inquirer to review the Observer Video on the VBEMS website while awaiting results of criminal background check Answer questions.
 - 2.1.4. Create Licensure file with status = **Observer Inquirer**
- 2.2 Upon receipt by VBEMS of an **unacceptable** criminal background check:
 - 2.2.1. Advise requester of the unacceptable background check.
 - 2.2.2. Explain that as a result, the process will stop.
 - 2.2.3. Change Licensure status to **Observer Archived** with appropriate notation entered.
- 2.3. Upon receipt by VBEMS of an **acceptable** criminal background check:
 - 2.3.1. Advise requester of the acceptable background check.
 - 2.3.2. Explain and forward the Observer Availability form to the requester with instructions to complete and return it to VBEMS at VBRescueObserver@VBGOV.com.
 - 2.3.3. Change Licensure status to **Observer Pending** with appropriate notation entered.
- 2.4 For an approved applicant or recruit:
 - 2.4.1. Explain and forward the Observer Availability form to the requester with instructions to complete return it to VBRescueObserver@VBGOV.com.
 - 2.4.2. Advise inquirer to review the Observer Video on VBEMS website while awaiting ride-along assignment
 - 2.4.3. Update comments in Licensure as appropriate without changing their status

3.0 Scheduling the Observer Ride-Along

- 3.1 Upon receipt of the requester's Observer Availability Form, the goal of the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator, or designee, will be to contact the requester within two (2) business days to:
 - 3.1.1. Review the availability form for completeness.
 - 3.1.2. Check OSCAR for compatible availability:

3.1.2.1. If no compatible OSCAR shifts are available based on submitted availabilities, the requester will be contacted to provide additional availabilities.

3.1.2.2. If there is a compatible OSCAR shift:

3.1.2.2.1. The date/time selected will be placed onto the OSCAR schedule (see Appendix A)

3.1.2.2.2. The observer will be assigned to EMS Chief-10.

3.1.2.2.3. Requester will be contacted.

3.2. For a non-member observer, the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator or designee, will:

3.2.1. Change Licensure status to Observer = **Processed**

3.2.2. Register in the special "Class" in the Education Tab named Observer Inquirer Shift 1 (or Shift 2 if this is a repeat)

3.2.3. Mark the Observer's Class status = **Scheduled**

3.3. For a volunteer applicant or recruit observer, the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator or designee, will:

3.3.1. Not change their status in Licensure.

3.3.2. Register applicant in the special "Class" in the Education Tab named Observer Applicant Shift

3.3.3. Mark the Applicant's Observer Class status = **Scheduled**

3.4. A notification that includes: a) the Observer's inquiry form, b) photocopy of driver's license, c) availability form **highlighting any special requests** and d) the returned criminal background approval notice will be sent from the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator to the scheduled EMS Chief-10 advising of the observer shift assignment.

3.5. Once scheduled in OSCAR, the date/time shall not be deleted or changed except by EMS Chief-10 or based upon the department service needs at the time of, or during, the observer shift.

3.5.1. The Volunteer Admissions Coordinator will be notified of any changes by EMS Chief-10 and will update Licensure as appropriate.

4.0 At the Time of the Scheduled Ride-Along

4.1. Chief-10 Responsibilities

- 4.1.1. Observer will be instructed to report to EMS Headquarters to meet EMS Chief-10 at the designated time for the assigned ride-along shift.
- 4.1.2. EMS Chief-10 will have application paperwork, including copy of driver's license, provided by the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator prior to the start of an observer shift.
- 4.1.3. EMS Chief-10 will verify observer's identity via driver's license.
- 4.1.4. **EMS Chief-10 will manage the unit assignment for the shift and will make every attempt possible to accommodate any special ride-along assignment request(s) from the observer or from a volunteer rescue squad or the MRT.**
- 4.1.5. EMS Chief-10 will review safety, confidentiality, photographic and audio-graphic policies and COVID guidelines (Appendix B) with the observer
- 4.1.6. EMS Chief-10 will witness the observer signing the Waiver of Liability form and place the signed form in the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator's mailbox to upload into Licensure.

4.2. AIC Responsibilities

- 4.2.1. The AIC will be the supervisor of the observer during the ride-along.
 - 4.2.1.1. Should it be deemed necessary for any reason to remove the observer from continuing the ride-along, the AIC will contact an EMS Supervisor.
- 4.2.2. Upon unit assignment, the AIC (and crew) will
 - 4.2.2.1. Greet the observer.
 - 4.2.2.2. Provide observer with the current COVID rules (Appendix B), a safety vest, a unit tour
 - 4.2.2.3. Reiterate that the **observer may NOT**:
 - 4.2.2.3.1. Perform any patient care whatsoever
 - 4.2.2.3.2. Communicate on any radio
 - 4.2.2.3.3. Drive any EMS vehicle
 - 4.2.2.3.4. Assist with lifting or moving of a patient or equipment
 - 4.2.2.3.5. Participate at any scene in any manner other than observing
 - 4.2.2.3.6. Take any photographic or audio recordings of any kind
 - 4.2.2.3.7. Distribute, redistribute or post any ride-along messages, incident or patient care information,

or photos on any social media platform or in any other manner whatsoever

- 4.2.3. Based upon service demand during a scheduled ride-along and **considering the observer's, the volunteer rescue squad's or MRT's request(s) as much as possible**, EMS Chief-10 shall have flexibility to reassign an observer to a different unit throughout the scheduled ride-time.

5.0 After the Ride-Along Shift

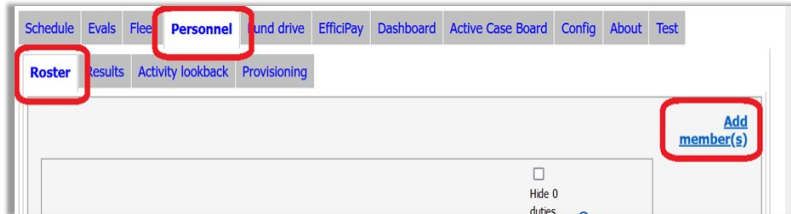
- 5.1. The goal of the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator will be to contact the observer within two (2) business days after a ride-along to conduct a follow-up. The purpose will be to obtain information about their experience and offer encouragement to apply for membership.
- 5.2. Observer Class status in the Education tab will be changed to:
 - 5.2.1. *Pass* (completed), or
 - 5.2.2. *Withdrew* (provided advanced notice of tap-out), or
 - 5.2.3. *No Show* (provided no advanced call, did not arrive for shift)
- 5.3. **Recruits** (as defined above) will be offered the opportunity to schedule a second ride-along shift, provided that the second shift be completed before EMT Academy begins.
- 5.4. Licensure user status changed to *Archived* upon completion of observer shift(s).
- 5.5. The Observer's volunteer rescue squad or MRT shall be updated with information obtained in §5.1 and encouraged to contact the Observer as appropriate.

The Observer Program is administered by the Volunteer Admissions Coordinator, or designee, within the Educational Services Division as a means of community outreach and recruitment of volunteers for the department.

APPENDIX A OSCAR Step-by-Step instructions

When a pending observer's background check comes through, staff can add the observer to OscarTRACK as follows referring to their submitted availability:

For non-members, Applicants with Approved Background Checks:



Then put the Add Member page into Observer mode:



The rest is just like adding an approved applicant, albeit simpler because OscarTRACK already knows this is an observer.

For all Observers Including Recruits:

Scheduling an observer is just like scheduling a student, except for one different setting on the compliancy tab:



When scheduling, OscarTRACK knows that a "DAY" shift for an observer is from 8:00am-4:00pm and a "NIGHT" shift is from 3:00pm-11:00pm. If necessary, timeframe may be edited for 7:00pm-11:00pm shift, but observer shifts past 11:00pm are not allowed

OscarTRACK will enter the specific hours accordingly, and will automatically assign the observer to "010" (EMS Chief 10). EMS Chief 10 can then assign the observer to any appropriate unit in the usual fashion, taking into consideration any special requests (see §4.1.4 and §4.2.3).

APPENDIX B

Public Health Safety Precautions

The below notification is provided to Requester during the authorization process and reviewed again at time of scheduled shift by EMS Chief-10.

COVID-19 NOTICE: The City of Virginia Beach has established guidelines based upon the Centers for Disease Control and other regulations for the safety of personnel, patients and observers.

- **Current guidelines:**
 - **Masks are required if less than 6 feet of social distancing** (including between buildings, in the ambulance, in hospitals, etc.):
 - Surgical masks are required to be worn on all calls.
 - Calls deemed as high-risk exposure of COVID or other disease will result in observer being removed from close proximity of the patient, the scene and patient transportation to the hospital.

 - **DO NOT come to the observer shift if you are sick or IF:**
 - You are quarantined due to COVID exposure (quarantine is less restrictive if fully vaccinated).
 - You are COVID positive.
 - Any of the above is true, call the EMS Field Supervisor and advise you will not be arriving for your observer shift due to feeling ill.

 - **If you feel ill during your observer shift:**
 - Put on a mask (if not already wearing one.)
 - Immediately advise the AIC. AIC will contact EMS Supervisor or EMS Chief-10 for guidance
 - Isolate yourself as much as feasible