

Grand Forks Fire Department

Standard Operating Procedures

SOP# 902.01	Section Fire Prevention	Title Citizen Observer Program
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I. Purpose

The Citizen Observer Program permits interested citizens to observe Grand Forks Fire Department operations by riding with Command Officers or Fire Companies.

II. Potential Participants

The program is open to family members of Fire Department personnel, City officials, members of the press, visiting fire personnel from other cities, and on a limited basis, the general public. Qualified medical personnel (i.e., physician/medical director, other emergency medicine physicians, any other physician, emergency room or intensive care nurses, other nursing specialties, other medical personnel) will be scheduled to ride with fire companies; the physician/medical director may ride with a Command Officer.

III. Scheduling Process

Observers will not be scheduled on any Fire Department utility or support vehicles. Observers must be at least 18 years of age; except for family members of FD personnel. In the case of family members, participation with fire companies they must be at least 13 years of age, and if riding with Command Officers they must be at least 11 years of age.

The Deputy Chief, through the appropriate Battalion Chief, will schedule citizen observers and official visitors to ride with fire companies. Observers should be scheduled at least one shift ahead of the planned date. The Battalion Chief will notify the appropriated (assigned) company as soon as the rider has been scheduled. This information will be entered on to the day sheet for that shift and that company. The Deputy Chief, through the appropriate Battalion Chief, will schedule observers to ride with the Battalion Chiefs.

Normally, citizen observers will be scheduled to ride between 1300 to 1800 hours, Monday through Friday. Family members and visiting fire personnel may be scheduled from 1300 to 2200 hours, Monday through Saturday. Officials, dignitaries and the press may be scheduled outside of these guidelines, if cleared through the Deputy Fire Chief's office. Exceptions to these hours will be at the discretion of the appropriate Battalion Chief, with an explanation forwarded to the Deputy Chief. Members of the general public will be scheduled to ride a maximum of once every two years. Observers may be scheduled for shorter timeframes than those allowed, but generally not for longer timeframes. All observers will be advised at the beginning of their observation period, that emergency activity may delay their return to quarters at the appointed time.

IV. Responsibilities

Company Officers are responsible for insuring that observers are appropriately attired for their assigned activity. Shorts, dresses, cutoffs and sandals are some of the items considered as inappropriate dress. Any observer failing to meet the appropriate dress requirements, or failing to conduct themselves appropriately will be asked to leave the station by the Company Officer and they will be excluded from any future observer programs. The Company Officer will notify the observer of the no smoking policies of the department, and any and all observers **must** conform to those policies.

If a Company Officer has concerns regarding an observer, those concerns shall be brought to the attention of the Battalion Chief. The Battalion Chief or acting Battalion Chief shall have authority over concerns regarding the Citizen Observer Program.

V. On-site Process

All citizen observers must sign a release form before being permitted to ride. For all observers 18 years of age and over, the Company Officer will assist in completing the release form, witness their signature and then sign his/her name on the line indicated. Completed forms will be forwarded to the Deputy Chiefs office for disposition. The Company Officer will record the name, arrival and departure times of all observers in the daily log. This is very important for many reasons, not the least of which is the need to follow-up with the observer after the observation period.

For observers that are family members of Fire Department personnel, release forms will need to be signed by both the family member and the employee. The employee is responsible for his/her family member while they are participating in the observer program.

Citizen observers will then be issued a "Citizen Observer" ID badge which will be prominently displayed for the duration of the observation period. The badge will be retrieved by the Company Officer at the completion of the observer's stay. A safety vest will be assigned to the observer to be worn when required by department procedures.

The Company Officer will brief the observer on the Fire Department's expectations for the observation period and assure that the observer is aware of all safety requirements (seat belts, vests, etc.). 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. It is the Company Officer's responsibility to insure that the observer has the opportunity to observe the incident where possible, but must not allow the observer access to a sensitive EMS situation that could embarrass the patient, the patient's family, or the observer.

Circumstances may arise when qualified medical personnel or a family member wishes to ride without being previously scheduled. The Company Officer may grant approval in these two instances as long as a scheduled rider is not displaced. All documentation will be completed as described in this procedure. The Company Officer will notify the Battalion Chief of any unscheduled observers at the earliest possible time. Scheduled observers shall always have preference over unscheduled observers.

VI. Safety and Adherence statements

Under no circumstances will fire personnel (or anyone else) ride in an unsafe position on any apparatus to accommodate an observer or for any other reason.

It is the Company Officer's responsibility to assure that all requirements of the standard operating procedure are strictly followed.