

*"Keep Orlando a safe city by reducing and maintaining livable neighborhoods."*

## ORLANDO POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

### 2102.5, CITIZEN OBSERVER PROGRAM (COP)

EFFECTIVE DATE:	8/28/2025
RESCINDS:	2102.4
DISTRIBUTION GROUP:	ALL EMPLOYEES
REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY:	COMMUNITY RELATIONS DIVISION COMMANDER
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS:	2, 18
RELATED LAWS:	N/A
RELATED POLICIES:	City Policy <a href="#">800.4</a>
CHIEF OF POLICE:	ERIC D. SMITH

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## 1. PURPOSE

It is the policy of the Orlando Police Department to promote the community-oriented policing philosophy through a partnership between the Police Department and the citizens of Orlando. As the "eyes and ears" of the Police Department, the Citizen Observer Program volunteers will perform crime-watch duties, alerting the Police Department of hazards and unlawful behavior.

## 2. POLICY

The Citizen Observer Program volunteers shall operate and adhere to all applicable regulations, City/Department policies and procedures, the Citizen Observer Program's standard operating procedures, and any applicable sections of the Department's written directive system.

### 3. DEFINITIONS

N/A

### 4. PROCEDURES

#### 4.1 SELECTION CRITERIA

Individuals selected as volunteers for the Citizen Observer Program shall meet the minimum qualifications listed in Appendix A.

#### 4.2 UNIFORMS

The Citizen Observer Program volunteer uniforms shall comply with the standards outlined in the current issue of P&P 1624, Uniforms, and in design shall be distinctly different from uniforms worn by sworn members. Citizen Observer Program volunteers shall wear their uniforms only while on duty and to and from their duty assignment.

#### 4.3 RESPONSIBILITIES AND AUTHORITY

The primary responsibility of the Citizen Observer Program volunteers is to perform crime-watch duties in Orlando neighborhoods. They will alert the Police Department of unlawful or suspicious behavior, report hazards to public safety and, when required, assist Police Department personnel in the performance of their duties. Members of the Citizen Observer Program will recognize that the scope of their authority is extremely limited. Members have no law enforcement authority and will not apprehend or pursue suspects (on foot or in vehicles), detain or interrogate persons, or stop or pursue vehicles that have committed traffic violations.

Citizen Observer Program volunteers receive traffic control training to direct traffic in a public or private parking lot under the direct supervision of an Orlando Police Officer or Community Service Officer. All Citizen Observer Program volunteers will be dressed in an approved uniform and shall wear traffic vests while directing traffic. Citizen Observer Program volunteers will utilize flashlights with wands when directing traffic at night. Citizen Observer Program volunteers are prohibited from directing traffic on any public roadway unless directed to do so by a law enforcement officer.

#### 4.4 RESTRICTIONS

##### 4.4.1 USE OF FORCE

Under no circumstances will the Citizen Observer Program volunteers be allowed to use physical force in the performance of their duties, except as a last resort in self-defense. Citizen Observer Program volunteers shall not possess weapons of any kind while on duty.

The Citizen Observer Program volunteers do not have arrest powers; therefore, they shall not attempt to detain people or make arrests. If a situation arises where an arrest is indicated, a police officer will be summoned to the scene.

##### 4.4.2 REPORTING CRIMES IN PROGRESS

When reporting a crime in progress, the Citizen Observer Program volunteer shall provide the exact location to Communications and maintain a safe distance until a police officer arrives. If the situation presents a danger to the Citizen Observer Program volunteer, he/she shall leave the scene until a police officer arrives.

##### 4.4.3 EMERGENCY OPERATIONS OF COP VEHICLES

Under no circumstances shall the Citizen Observer Program volunteers engage in any activity that requires emergency operation of their assigned vehicles. Emergency lights shall only be used in close proximity to traffic accident scenes or to alert the public of roadway blockage or other potential traffic hazards when necessary.

#### **4.4.4 DUTY HOURS**

Duty hours for the Citizen Observer Program volunteers will be from 6 a.m. to 12 midnight. COP volunteers are prohibited from working between the hours of 12 midnight and 6 a.m. without the prior permission of the Chief of Police.

#### **4.4.5 RESTRICTED AREAS**

The Citizen Observer Program volunteers shall not patrol those areas which are deemed restricted areas for Community Service Officers. The East Patrol Division commander will supply Communications with a list of restricted CSO/COP areas on a periodic basis.

### **4.5 SUPERVISION**

The Citizen Observer Program is assigned to the Crime Prevention Unit and is under the administrative control of the Community Involvement Section Commander. When working in a patrol status, COP volunteers will come under the command of the on-duty watch commander for the sector to which they are assigned.

The Police Volunteer Coordinator will be the COP coordinator. The coordinator will ensure that each COP volunteer receives the training concerning the duties and responsibilities for the tasks they will be allowed to perform. New members are required to ride along with COP Trainers for 40 hours before going solo. COPs will train in the following areas:

1. Safety Policy and Procedures
2. Driver's Training
3. Traffic Control
4. Radio Training quarterly
5. Code Enforcement
6. CPR/First Aid
7. Scenario Training

Additional annual training may include:

1. Domestic Violence
2. Fugitive Unit
3. Opioid Crisis
4. Active Shooter Training
5. Scams

The COP Program Coordinator shall complete an annual evaluation as outlined in the current issue of P&P 2206, Volunteer Program.

The Police Volunteer Coordinator shall provide the COP volunteers with their daily patrol assignments. These assignments shall reflect the changing crime trends and patterns within the City as dictated during the weekly crime meeting. The Community Relations Unit Sergeant shall keep the Police Volunteer Coordinator up-to-date on these latest crime trends.

#### **4.6 VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT**

The Citizen Observer Program volunteers are required to volunteer a minimum of 12 hours per month. Hours contributed may be in the form of patrol, administrative duty, attendance at meetings, training sessions and/or other activities. Any decisions relative to the continued service of a COP volunteer at the Orlando Police Department will be at the sole discretion of the Chief of Police.

COP volunteers who drive a city vehicle will be required to pass an annual driver's physical with a drug screen as outlined under City of Orlando P&P [800.4, Operators of City Motor Vehicles and Equipment](#) (Annual Physical Exam).

### **5. FORMS AND APPENDICES**

#### **Appendix A – Citizen Observer Program**