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Tēnā koe Jaeger

Request for information

Thank you for your Official Information Act 1982 request dated 20 December 2022. You asked:

May I please see the Policy and Procedure regarding "ride-alongs" and other situations where observations are allowed.

All information relevant to your request is contained within the Police Manual.

The Police Manual contains all good practice guidelines and instructions for the New Zealand Police. Each chapter provides principles that detail high level expected outcomes from following the chapter. Where the chapters detail good practice that is expected to be followed, a different path may be followed if it considers the good practice, is lawful, has integrity and can be justified to achieve enhanced outcomes.

The chapter relevant to your request is called Management of observers. A copy of the chapter is included with this response.

Yours sincerely



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Management of observers

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Policy standards and principles

What

Police for a number of reasons allows pre-authorised observers to be present in Police stations and vehicles, maritime and air units, and Emergency Communication Centres.

Why

Observers form an important part of Police's accountability to the public by enabling members of the media or the general public to gain a first-hand, "fly-on-the-wall" view of policing in a variety of settings.

How

Each observer is pre-approved with controls including health and safety actively practised. Police involved with observers are aware and mindful of the inherent risks when allowing them to be present in observing day to day or specific operational policing activities.

Risk must be minimised as best as possible and observers must be briefed and made aware to not interfere with the operational activities being undertaken at that time.

The selection and approval process for confirming individuals to be an observer is outlined below. Depending on the type of observer, the criteria for approval will differ.

Overview

Introduction

This chapter details the responsibilities of Police employees in managing volunteers or observers in Police vehicles, maritime and air units, and Emergency Communication Centres.

Exemptions

This chapter does not apply to the carriage of members of the public in non-operational situations when associated with a community charity function. Such carriage is subject to the approval of a district or area commander. See '[Police vehicle management](#)' chapter.

General cautions

Police must always be mindful of the inherent risk in allowing observers in Police vehicles, and that prior approval must be obtained before carrying non-Police persons in Police vehicles, maritime and air units.

Observers must take a passive role wherever possible; however, on occasions they may be required to assist Police in their duties.

Firearms

An observer should not be placed at, or enter into, a situation involving firearms or the possibility of firearms. Where constabulary staff need to wear Hard Armour Plates (HAP) in compliance with the '[Police firearms](#)' policy, then the observer should be excluded from the incident scene. This includes a situation where routine arming has been authorised.

Refer to the 'Assessing risk to passengers in Police vehicles' section in the '[Police vehicle management](#)' chapter of the Police Manual for further guidance.

Who is an 'observer'?

For the purposes of this chapter, an 'observer' is a person with a specific interest in policing who:

- meets the criteria
- is formally authorised as an observer
- has signed a [Wellness and Safety Induction Checklist](#) and understands the risks involved in accompanying Police
- accompanies on-duty Police in Police vehicles, maritime or air units as an observer.

Examples

This table shows examples of observer categories.

Observer category	Description
Scope	Applicants to join Police who are required to undertake 40 hours accompanying and observing Police activity and interaction with the public.
Media	Accredited journalists and film crew personnel accompanying Police for the purpose of filming or observing Police activities in an operational setting.
General observer	Members of the public accompanying Police for the purpose of observing Police. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - persons thinking about applying to join Police - students completing a study on Police - in exceptional circumstances, family members or friends.
Police observers	Off-duty Police employees accompanying specialist Police to obtain on-the-job experience. <p>Note: A Police observer is not subject to the security checking process but they must complete the Wellness and Safety Induction Checklist and be authorised as noted.</p> <p>Police observers must be aware of the 'Off-duty interventions' chapter and if issued with BAS/SRBA and appointments must have these available whilst observing.</p>
Police volunteers	Working on a specific activity supporting Police and community - may occasionally accompany Police.
Community Group volunteers	Work alongside Police but under the control of their own organisation, e.g. Neighbourhood Support, Community Patrols, Victim Support, Maori Wardens, Blue Light, DARE, Search and Rescue, and occasionally as an observer.

Exemptions

An employee from another agency engaged in a joint operation with Police is not an observer as defined in this chapter.

Observers in Emergency Communication Centres

Only the security check and [Wellness and Safety Induction Checklist](#) (available through the [Safer People Forms](#) page on the Police Intranet) outlined in this chapter apply to observers in a Emergency Communications Centre. Authority for these observers is obtained from the relevant centre manager.

Wearing Police uniform and insignia

Civilian or non-Police observers must **not** wear or use any uniform or equipment issued to a Police employee that may portray them as being a Police constable. This includes any reflective gear displaying the word "Police".

If an observer for safety reasons requires a Hi-Visibility Vest, (e.g. at a road crash) a plain vest must be supplied for their use during the shift.

Selection and approval

Selection process

Any Police employee can receive a request from a person who wishes to be considered as an observer. This table details the selection process.

Stage	Description
1	<p>The applicant must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - present photo identification and, where appropriate, other formal credentials (i.e. media or student ID) - be briefed on what an observer accompanying Police can likely expect to encounter during a 'ride-along' - allow a basic background check through NIA (not required for Police employees).
2	The employee recommends to an approver , whether the applicant should be accepted as an observer.
3	The approver decides whether or not to accept the applicant as an observer. If the applicant is not accepted, the approver notifies the applicant of the decision and, if requested, the reasons (unless there are valid grounds to withhold that information).
4	The approver determines and issues any conditions which could include time frames, type of observation role etc.
5	<p>If the applicant is accepted and prior to commencing observing, the approver must:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - again explain what an observer accompanying Police can likely expect to encounter during a 'ride-along' - obtain the applicants acknowledgement (in writing on a Wellness and Safety Induction Checklist) of the provisions relating to safety, conduct, confidentiality and disclaimer - advise the applicant of the next steps (e.g. Police liaison or Police coordinator) such advice should include the need to wear appropriate clothing - advise the applicant of the conditions of the approval and that the approval may be suspended or withdrawn by Police at any time without the reason being advised - advise the applicant that the approval is subject to operational commitments which could change at any time - refer the now approved observer to the relevant Police employee for allocation and management - advise the employee responsible for taking the observer of the approval and any conditions.

This table details the approval levels for the different types of observers.

Observer category	Approval by
Scope - Realistic work preview	Scope liaison officer.
Media	Where media ask to accompany Police to observe, report or film any activity, the request must be discussed with the Police Media Centre, Media & Communications, PNHQ, for advice and liaison with districts.
Observer - vehicle or beat	The Area Commander or delegated approver in the area in which the observer will primarily be based will consider requests and subsequent approvals.
Observer - Maritime	The respective officer in charge of the specialist operations support units will consider all requests and subsequently make a recommendation. Observers may only be approved by the Inspector OC Marine Rescue Centre (Auckland Maritime) or District Operations Manager (Wellington Maritime).
Observer - Air Support	Observers may only be approved by the Inspector Metro Operations Support, Auckland District.

Conditions for approval

Observers may be authorised if:

- any public display and/or carriage of an observer does not interfere with normal authorised journeys and operational policing will always take priority
- there is minimal impact on staff and rosters, and the minimum coverage is maintained in the districts
- training and preparation time for the display is on-duty time and must be included in the roster.

Revocation of approval for observer

This table details the process to suspend or revoke an observer approval.

1	If any employee has any concerns about an observer, they must return the observer to the pickup point. Reasons could include inappropriate behaviour, interference with Police duties, failure to follow instructions or conditions, physical or mental well-being concerns etc.
2	The employee must advise their supervisor in writing of the decision and the reason(s) why observer was returned.
3	The supervisor must provide the report to the approver together with any comments on the decision and any recommendation.

Advising a Communications Centre

When initially carrying an observer in an operational situation, the Emergency Communications Dispatcher must be advised that the unit has an observer (and the type of observer) in the vehicle. This ensures the Emergency Communications Centre can properly assess any risks before deploying the unit.

Instructions in respect of approved observers

These instructions apply:

- SCOPE instructions
- Media related observer [instructions](#)
- Any relevant Local orders.

Reminder: No observer may be carried without prior approval and a [Wellness and Safety Induction Checklist](#) completed (this must be

forwarded to local district Health and Safety Advisor for filing).

Note: If an observer is carried on a number of occasions in the same operational setting, a single [Wellness and Safety Induction Checklist](#) is sufficient, i.e. off-duty constable accompanying a specialist unit as part of a familiarisation process.
