

# WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

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## I-13 CITIZEN OBSERVER PATROL

**EFFECTIVE: 01/01/2005**

CALEA Standards: N/A

CFA Standards: 6.01-6.04

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**I. POLICY:** The West Palm Beach Police Department maintains a Citizen Observer Patrol program to gain the assistance of citizens in the observation of criminal violations within the City of West Palm Beach. A volunteer Citizen Observer Patrol program is a valuable resource for a law enforcement agency. The objective of the program is to alert the West Palm Beach Police Department of any potential or actual criminal behavior.

### **II. DEFINITIONS:**

A. Volunteer Citizen Observer - A person appointed by the Chief of Police as a citizen observer, who has met the prescribed qualifications, background checks and training requirements for the position of citizen observer.

B. Citizen Observer Patrol- The action of moving about an area for the purpose of security and observation.

### **III. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS:**

A. All observers must be at least 18 years of age.

B. All observers must possess a valid Florida driver license.

C. All observers must satisfactorily pass a personal background check.

D. All observers will be fingerprinted and photographed.

E. All observers will possess good moral character, a positive attitude and be in good physical condition.

F. All observers must successfully complete the Citizens Observer Patrol Academy.

### **IV. TRAINING:**

A. The citizen observer will attend a training program conducted by the West Palm Beach Police Department.

B. The training program may include liability issues, delineation of citizens responsibilities, and other appropriate subject matter.

C. Upon completion of the training the citizen observers will:

1. Understand the scope of their authority and their limits.

2. Understand the purpose of patrol.

3. Demonstrate their ability in reporting skills.

4. Demonstrate an ability to perform patrol functions.

D. When a Citizen Observer Patrol Member is at fault in a traffic crash, he or she will be required to complete a driver training course/ exam conducted by the Community Services Supervisor or a designee.

### **V. ORGANIZATION OF THE CITIZEN OBSERVER PATROL:**

A. The citizen observer function is established and will be composed of citizen volunteers to assist in reducing criminal activity.

- B. The Citizen Observer Patrol will be coordinated by the Crime Prevention Section supervisor or a designee.
- C. Each designated area will have a Civilian Coordinator who will administer to the day-to-day operations of the Citizen Observer Patrol program.
- D. All daily reports and paper work will be turned in at the end of the shift and checked by the Coordinator.
- E. The Chief of Police reserves the right to be the appointing authority and retains authority to rescind the appointment of any observer.
- F. The Chief of Police is the final authority over all matters of policy and procedure, operations and administration, and retains the right to amend, suspend, change, delete, or add to the provisions of this directive.
  - 1. During the event that a policy violation occurs, the Crime Prevention Officer will notify their Supervisor of the violation in memorandum form. The Crime Prevention Officer will make a recommendation of verbal counseling, written reprimand, suspension, or termination from participation in the program.

**VI. AUTHORITY AND DUTIES:**

- A. A citizen observer has NO legal authority to stop, detain or hinder any person from moving about freely.
- B. A citizen observer has NO legal authority to stop and question any person or persons.
- C. A citizen observer has NO authority, (i.e., police, arrest, or otherwise) and will not carry any type of weapon while working in the Citizen Observer Patrol program, even if licensed to do so.
- D. Citizen Patrol members will: carry their department issued radio; their department issued cell phone and wear their Citizen Patrol uniform when they are patrolling in a Citizen Patrol vehicle. Citizen Patrol members are NOT allowed to wear or carry these items for any other reason unless approved in writing by the Crime Prevention Officer.
- E. While on patrol, the Citizen Observers will:
  - 1. Report identifiable or potential hazards within a designated area.
  - 2. Perform routine checks of closed houses and report any unusual occurrences (appendix C).
  - 3. Perform checks of elderly residents and contact individuals upon request.
  - 4. Be courteous and professional in the performance of duties and assigned tasks.
  - 5. Maintain all equipment in proper condition.
  - 6. Maintain physical ability and performance in conformity with accepted West Palm Beach Police Department standards.
  - 7. When called upon by dispatch, members will assist with search and assist operations (appendix D)
  - 8. Provide assistance when a hurricane watch or warning is issued (appendix A).

**VII. MOTOR VEHICLES:**

- A. The City of West Palm Beach provides vehicles for the Citizen Observer Program. No other vehicles are authorized.
- B. The area coordinator will be responsible for the care and maintenance of the vehicles.

- C. Quarterly inspections of the vehicles will be conducted by a Crime Prevention Section Supervisor.
- D. The vehicles will only be driven while performing Citizen Observer Patrol functions and unless authorized by the Chief of Police or designee, all other use is strictly prohibited.
- E. All traffic crashes and/or damage to the vehicles will be reported immediately and a crash/damaged property report will be completed.

**VIII. BICYCLES:**

- A. Citizen Observers will be issued bicycles for those citizens who complete a bicycle training course in addition to initial training.
- B. The bicycles will be maintained by the area coordinator.
- C. Bicycle equipment will include:
  - 1. A helmet that will be worn at all times while the bicycle is being ridden.
  - 2. A cellular telephone.

**IX. UNIFORM:**

- A. When on-duty, Citizen Observers will wear the Department issued shirt and a baseball cap which clearly identifies them as Citizen Observer Patrol members and not sworn Police Officers.
- B. Citizen Observer Patrol members will wear shorts or long pants, which are not issued items
  - 1. Pants or shorts will be navy blue in color

**X. LEAVE OF ABSENCE:**

- A. Citizen Observers may be granted a leave of absence upon request and approval by the Volunteer Coordinator. (A leave of absence will be any time over 90 days)

**XI. REFERENCE:**

- SOP # I-16 Citizen Ride Along.
- Rules and Regulations.

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**Delsa R. BUSH, Chief of Police**

Original issue: 04/03/93  
Revised: 01/01/2005  
I.D. # 1491

History: SOP # changed to I-13 on 01/01/2005  
Old SOP # 6.03, 6.620.079  
Revision Dates: 01/15/98, 06/01/1999

Job Title Task Files: Crime Prevention Officer(s)

**Appendix A****Hurricane Duties****When a Hurricane Watch is Issued:**

1. Patrol your community and remind neighbors that all loose debris, outdoor furniture, grills, yard cuttings, and trash cans should be secured in their garages.
2. Check on the elderly or disabled and give them the Citizen Patrol Nextel phone number in case they need assistance.

**When a Hurricane Warning is Issued:**

1. Ensure the gas tanks in the Citizen Patrol Vehicle(s) are full.
2. Check cell phones to ensure they are working properly, alert The Crime Prevention Officer (CPO) for a phone check their alert number is: 158\*41\*3616. Phones will then be left at the residence of the Citizen Observer Patrol (COP) Coordinator's and left on during the hurricane watch period and during a hurricane. Phones should be fully charged.
3. Check radios; make sure both batteries are charged and left with the COP Coordinator.
4. Check equipment in the Citizen Patrol Car to ensure operational readiness.
5. Check your Citizen Patrol Hurricane Shift Log; who is listed as the first team on patrol when the conditions are drivable in your area.
6. Citizen Patrol Vehicles will be left at the residence that will initiate the patrol.

**After the Storm/Hurricane passes:**

1. Coordinator's will advise their COP when weather has cleared in their area.
2. The first team will pick up the phone and radio from the Coordinator and begin their patrols. Make a list of any damage in the neighborhood, and then alert the Crime Prevention Officer on the Nextel.
3. Check on elderly or disabled residents to determine if medical attention is needed.
4. If your community neighborhood suffered extensive damage, report to the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) rally point; check with the CERT Coordinator to assist with damage assessments or transport CERT teams to other locations.
5. If your area does not have an active CERT team, list the damages in the area and report them to the CPO. Resume normal patrol duties until advised

Appendix B  
Hurricane Roster

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- 14. \_\_\_\_\_
- 15. \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix C****West Palm Beach  
House Watch Program**

A. When a new House Watch is listed with the Crime Prevention Unit the CPO will complete the House Watch form and fax the listing to your COP Coordinator.

1. The new listing will be logged for each vehicle.

B. All COP's will complete House Watch forms for the zones they are assigned.

1. Record on Watch Sheets the date, time and your name.
2. Record that the inspection was made.
3. All records will be maintained by the Crime Prevention Unit

C. A House Watch will only be conducted during daylight hours and utilize a minimum of two COP members at all times.

1. Park the COP vehicle in front of the house.
2. Activate your emergency flashers.
3. Radio dispatch with the address and purpose i.e. house check.
4. One member will carry the portable radio and will monitor the radio during the check

D. When a residence on the House Watch list has a vehicle observed in the driveway that is not listed on the watch sheet, record the plate number and vehicle description.

1. Drive a safe distance from the residence and radio dispatch to request a tag check.
2. Attempt to determine if the vehicle belongs to a neighbor or relative
3. Request that an Officer respond to check the residence. Do not check the residence with out an Officer or until ownership of the vehicle is confirmed.

E. House checks are performed by doing a walk around the structure while, looking for anything that would be considered unusual. Open doors, pried door locks or jams, broken windows or removed window screens.

1. During the inspection do not shake or pull on doors, the house could be alarmed and this could set the alarm off causing a police response.
2. Should you set off an alarm you must notify dispatch immediately.
3. The inspection is a visual check of the house and surrounding area that can be accessed without opening a fence or through a hedge.
4. If problems are noticed leave the property and drive a safe distance from the residence and radio dispatch report what was found, stand by for an officer to respond.
5. If the property is secure, and checks are completed notify dispatch that you are going back into service.

**Appendix D****Search and Assist Program**

A. As a COP Member you may be called upon by the Police Department when needed for extra assistance. i.e. missing or endangered children or adults. When an alert is issued and police begin to saturate an area you may be called to respond to the area to assist.

B. Once received, advise dispatch that you are enroute, ask where you will be needed and for the name and description of the missing. Notify dispatch when you arrive in the area and begin a systematic search (block by block). If you see a person that matches the description contact dispatch by radio with your location so that an officer can respond and make contact with the person.

1. Advise dispatch if the person appears to be in need of medical attention.
2. Do not make physical contact with the person unless you have been advised by an officer or dispatch personnel that there is no immediate threat.
3. Once recovery has been ascertained clear the area and resume regular patrol duties.

Appendix E

**CITIZEN OBSERVER PATROL SHIFT LOG**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Patrol Team Member(s): \_\_\_\_\_

House Watch:            Yes            No

Address Checked: \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Extra Patrol:            Yes            No

Areas Checked: \_\_\_\_\_

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**PATROL INCIDENTS & COMMENTS**

Incident & Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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Incident & Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

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