



Ride-Along Program

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue is proud to offer participation in its Ride-Along program to:

1. EMT Students for the purpose of fulfilling field clinical training requirements
2. Pre-hospital EMS Providers from other agencies
3. Those involved in the healthcare continuum
4. Individuals interested in a career in the Fire/EMS field
5. Elected officials desiring a greater understanding of Fire/EMS delivery
6. Others at the discretion of the administration

It is our goal to provide you with a quality educational opportunity that will create an understanding of the service provided by North Whatcom Fire & Rescue as we strengthen our relationship with other agencies and entities.

BACKGROUND

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue is an EMS (Emergency Medical Services) agency providing Basic Life Support (BLS) care throughout Whatcom County. Our response area covers urban, rural and wilderness environments from the Cities of Blaine, Birch Bay, Lynden, Ferndale, Bellingham and in the Mt. Baker National Forest. North Whatcom Fire & Rescue operates four EMT staffed ambulances (Aid Units). North Whatcom Fire & Rescue has four full time fire stations located throughout the district. Our crews work a 24-hour shift that begins at 8:00 A.M. An average 24-hour shift may have 6 to 10 responses for each unit. Historically, the busiest times of day are between the hours of 8:00 A.M. to Noon and between 4:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. Firefighter/EMT responses include a wide spectrum of medical and traumatic injuries.

RESTRICTIONS

North Whatcom Fire & Rescue requests that the following requirements be met by applicants requesting to ride on our apparatus:

1. Riders must be at least 18 years of age (exceptions may be made at the discretion of the Training Captain or Chief Officer).
2. Ride times will not be scheduled on Saturdays/Sundays or between the hours of 8:00 P.M. and 8:00 A.M.
3. Riders must not have a history of sexual abuse, pedophilia, violent crimes, or felony convictions.
4. A General Waiver of Liability shall be signed by the rider. If under 18 years of age, the agreement must be signed by a parent or legal guardian prior to scheduling ride time.
5. An understanding and acknowledgement of patient confidentiality and privacy rights must be signed.
6. Riders may not interact with patients without approval of the EMT or Officer on scene.

DISCLOSURE OF RISKS

Certain dangers are inherent to emergency response. Precautions are taken to minimize your exposure to dangers. However, it is important that you are aware of these hazards prior to scheduling your ride-along. These hazards include, but are not limited to: fire, explosions, flying objects, sharp objects, physical assaults, powered equipment, vehicle accidents, infectious patients, chemical, biological, radiological and heat exposures. In addition, you may be witness to incidents involving crime scenes, critical injuries, death, dismemberment, or decomposition. If you have questions or concerns regarding any of these risks, please request to speak with one of our supervisors. You must have a certain level of fitness and physical ability to perform under the conditions we are presented. This may include, but is not limited to: climbing multiple flights of stairs, walking long distances, and carrying equipment. If you have any physical limitations that may hinder your abilities, please request to speak with one of our supervisors. North Whatcom Fire & Rescue is not responsible for damage, loss or theft of the personal property of the rider.

CHAIN OF COMMAND

Our organization follows a strict chain of command designed to provide a safe and efficient working environment. You are an observer to the work of our employees and are not to take an active role in operations. An exception to this may be certified or licensed healthcare providers or EMT students meeting the objectives of their training program. If you have a list of objectives from your program, please present these to your assigned crew at the beginning of your scheduled shift.

When on the scene of an incident, remain in close proximity to your assigned crew without hindering their operations. You may be asked to maintain a greater distance if safety hazards are identified. You must follow the directions of any crew member. Under rare circumstances you may be asked to remain in the ambulance, engine or command vehicle.

SAFETY RULES

1. Seatbelts must be worn at all times when a vehicle is in motion.
2. Tobacco, Drug, Alcohol or Marijuana use is not permitted at anytime before or during your ride along.
3. If your crew responds to a fire, you are to stay with the vehicle or report to the incident commander as instructed. You are not to participate in any firefighting or rescue activities.
4. If you are injured or exposed to any potentially harmful substance, notify the officer immediately.
5. You may not possess a firearm or other weapon while riding with North Whatcom Fire & Rescue.
6. No food shall be stored, transported or consumed in the back of the ambulance.
7. You shall not operate the ambulance gurney while it holds a patient.
8. Orient yourself with where you will sit on the apparatus, seatbelt operation, safe entry and exit from the apparatus, and the location of equipment.

DRESS CODE

If you come from an agency that has a uniform, you may wear that during your ride-along. You must be professional in your appearance, clean and neatly groomed. Pants shall be black or dark blue, polo or dress shirt tucked into pants, and black shoes or work boots. Only logos representing your agency are permitted. NO DENIM JEANS, STRETCH PANTS, SKIRTS, DRESSES, SHORTS, SWEATS, T-SHIRTS, OPEN TOE OR ATHLETIC SHOES. Any tattoos must be covered. No necklaces, bracelets, earrings, or other visible piercings. No heavy use of perfumes, colognes, fragrances, or make-up. You will be asked to re-schedule your ride time if you are not properly attired or fail to project a professional appearance. A jacket and safety equipment and a visitor badge will be provided. A visitor badge must be visible at all times during your ride along.

PROFESSIONALISM

While on your ride-along, you are representing our agency. You are asked to conduct yourself in a professional manner. You are a guest in our facility. Please be polite and respectful to our employees, our patients and our citizens. Cell phones should be silenced. Refrain from making phone calls or texting during your scheduled ride along. Use of these devices while on an emergency response is prohibited. Behavior or attitudes that are not conducive to a cohesive working environment with our employees or do not project professionalism to the public may result in immediate termination of the ride-along.

PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

- For the purpose of patient confidentiality, you are considered part of our work force and privacy laws apply to you. You are granted no other rights or privileges of a North Whatcom Fire & Rescue employee.
- Under the state Uniform Healthcare Information Act and the federal Health Insurance Privacy and Accountability Act (HIPAA), each covered entity (North Whatcom Fire & Rescue) is responsible for training its workforce regarding protection of patient privacy.
- It is North Whatcom Fire & Rescue's liability if a member of its work force does not receive the information or reveals protected healthcare information (PHI).
- PHI is anything that could possibly or reasonably identify a patient, regardless of how it is communicated. This includes, but is not limited to: name, address, social security number, birth date, insurance ID number, telephone number, medical conditions, dates of service, incident locations, license plate numbers or vehicle identification numbers.
- Electronic protected healthcare information (ePHI) is any PHI sent or received electronically. ePHI includes photographs, computers, telephone, faxes and radio. You are not allowed to record or disclose any PHI or ePHI to any person or entity not involved in the care of that patient.
- You may not take any photographs, audio, social media posts, video of any patient or incident scene without written permission of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue and the patient.
- Information you see or hear while participating in your ride-along with Bellingham Fire Department is now and forever PHI.
- Disclosure of PHI or ePHI subjects you to the possibility of civil and criminal investigation and penalties. Penalties may be hundreds of thousands of dollars and up to ten years in federal prison.
- Do not repeat anything you see or hear, even to family or friends you trust.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE PROTECTION

You will be issued basic protective equipment to use during your ride time. Items provided will include protective medical gloves and protective eye wear. Even though you have been provided with protective equipment, you are not to willingly expose yourself to any patient's body fluids. You may not participate or perform any procedures that may expose you unless you have completed the State required infectious disease training class for EMS personnel. In the unlikely event that you become contaminated with a patient's body fluids, you must immediately notify the officer on duty.

MEALS

Meals are your responsibility and NWFR cannot guarantee meal breaks. Crews may go 6 to 8 hours without a break depending on what the shift may bring. Even if your ride time is not scheduled during your mealtime, emergency responses may not allow for your return at the anticipated time. It is suggested that you bring your meals with you to your scheduled ride. Crews will not be expected to assist you in obtaining food for your meal.

ARRIVAL AND CANCELLATIONS

Our crew members will attempt to meet you at the station at the time you are scheduled to ride. Please be on time and/early for your ride along if possible. If you must cancel your scheduled ride time, please notify North Whatcom Fire & Rescue as soon as possible (360) 318-9933. Failure to show up for your scheduled ride time may restrict your privilege to ride in the future.

A large, semi-transparent watermark of the North Whatcom Fire & Rescue logo is centered on the page. The logo features a Maltese cross with the word "FIRE" in the top arm and "RESCUE" in the bottom arm. A banner across the center of the cross contains the text "NORTH WHATCOM".

***North Whatcom Fire & Rescue hopes that you
enjoy your learning experience.***



Ride-Along Infectious Disease Information

Each emergency response has inherent risks. One of those risks is exposure to infectious diseases. North Whatcom Fire & Rescue has taken measures to minimize those risks through education, equipment engineering, immunization of employees, and use of protective equipment. In spite of efforts to mitigate these hazards, limited risks still exist. Below are a few of the most common diseases to be familiar with. The list is in no way inclusive of all possible infection.

Hepatitis B Virus

In 2007, 4,519 cases of acute Hepatitis B in the United States were reported to CDC; the overall incidence of reported acute Hepatitis B was 1.5 per 100,000 population, the lowest ever recorded. However, because many HBV infections are either asymptomatic or never reported, the actual number of new infections is estimated to be approximately tenfold higher. In 2007, an estimated 43,000 persons in the United States were newly infected with HBV. Rates are highest among adults, particularly males aged 25–44 years.

HBV is transmitted through activities that involve percutaneous (i.e., puncture through the skin) or mucosal contact with infectious blood or body fluids (e.g., semen, saliva), including:

- Sex with an infected partner
- Injection drug use that involves sharing needles, syringes, or drug-preparation equipment
- Birth to an infected mother
- Contact with blood or open sores of an infected person
- Needle sticks or sharp instrument exposures
- Sharing items such as razors or toothbrushes with an infected person

HBV is not spread through food or water, sharing eating utensils, breastfeeding, hugging, kissing, hand holding, coughing, or sneezing.

HBV can survive outside the body at least 7 days and still be capable of causing infection.

The following populations are at increased risk of becoming infected with HBV:

- Infants born to infected mothers
- Sex partners of infected persons
- Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship (e.g., >1 sex partner during the previous 6 months)
- Injection drug users
- Household contacts of persons with chronic HBV infection
- Healthcare and public safety workers at risk for occupational exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids
- Hemodialysis patients

The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends that the following persons be vaccinated against Hepatitis B:

- All infants, beginning at birth
- All children aged <19 years who have not been vaccinated previously
- Susceptible sex partners of Hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg)-positive persons
- Sexually active persons who are not in a long-term, mutually monogamous relationship (e.g., >1 sex partner during the previous 6 months)
- Persons seeking evaluation or treatment for a sexually transmitted disease
- Men who have sex with men
- Injection drug users
- Susceptible household contacts of HBsAg-positive persons
- Healthcare and public safety workers at risk for exposure to blood or blood-contaminated body fluids
- Persons with end-stage renal disease, including predialysis, hemodialysis, peritoneal dialysis, and home dialysis patients
- Residents and staff of facilities for developmentally disabled persons
- Travelers to [regions with intermediate or high rates of endemic HBV infection](#)
- Persons with chronic liver disease
- Persons with HIV infection
- All other persons seeking protection from HBV infection — acknowledgment of a specific risk factor is not a requirement for vaccination

Human Immunodeficiency Virus & AIDS

HIV is the human immunodeficiency virus. It is the virus that can lead to acquired immune deficiency syndrome, or AIDS. CDC estimates that about 56,000 people in the United States contracted HIV in 2006.

HIV damages a person's body by destroying specific blood cells, called CD4+ T cells, which are crucial to helping the body fight diseases.

Within a few weeks of being infected with HIV, some people develop flu-like symptoms that last for a week or two, but others have no symptoms at all. People living with HIV may appear and feel healthy for several years. However, even if they feel healthy, HIV is still affecting their bodies. All people with HIV should be seen on a regular basis by a health care provider experienced with treating HIV infection. Many people with HIV, including those who feel healthy, can benefit greatly from current medications used to treat HIV infection. These medications can limit or slow down the destruction of the immune system, improve the health of people living with HIV, and may reduce their ability to transmit the HIV. Untreated early HIV infection is also associated with many diseases including cardiovascular disease, kidney disease, liver disease, and cancer. Support services are also available to many people with HIV. These services can help people cope with their diagnosis, reduce risk behavior, and find needed services.

AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection, when a person's immune system is severely damaged and has difficulty fighting diseases and certain cancers. Before the development of certain medications, people with HIV could progress to AIDS in just a few years. Currently, people can live much longer - even decades - with HIV before they develop AIDS. This is because of "highly active" combinations of medications that were introduced in the mid-1990s.

No one should become complacent about HIV and AIDS. While current medications can dramatically improve the health of people living with HIV and slow progression from HIV infection to AIDS, existing treatments need to be taken daily for the rest of a person's life, need to be carefully monitored, and come with costs and potential side effects. At this time, there is no cure for HIV infection.

Despite major advances in diagnosing and treating HIV infection, in 2007, 35,962 cases of AIDS were diagnosed and 14,110 deaths among people living with HIV were reported in the United States.

HIV is spread primarily by:

Not using a condom when having sex with a person who has HIV. All sex with someone who has HIV contains some risk.

- Having multiple sex partners or the presence of other sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) can increase the risk of infection during sex.
- Sharing needles, syringes, rinse water, or other equipment used to prepare illicit drugs for injection.
- Being born to an infected mother—HIV can be passed from mother to child during pregnancy, birth, or breast-feeding.

Less common modes of transmission include:

- Being “stuck” with an HIV-contaminated needle or other sharp object. This risk pertains mainly to healthcare workers.
- Receiving blood transfusions, blood products, or organ/tissue transplants that are contaminated with HIV. This risk is extremely remote due to the rigorous testing of the U.S. blood supply and donated organs/tissue.
- HIV may also be transmitted through unsafe or unsanitary injections or other medical or dental practices. However, the risk is also remote with current safety standards in the U.S.
- Being bitten by a person with HIV. Each of the very small number of cases has included severe trauma with extensive tissue damage and the presence of blood. There is no risk of transmission if the skin is not broken.
- Contact between broken skin, wounds, or mucous membranes and HIV-infected blood or blood-contaminated body fluids. These reports have also been extremely rare.
- There is an extremely remote chance that HIV could be transmitted during deep, open-mouth kissing with an HIV-infected person if the HIV-infected person's mouth or gums are bleeding.
- Tattooing or body piercing present a potential risk of HIV transmission, but no cases of HIV transmission from these activities have been documented. Only sterile equipment should be used for tattooing or body piercing.

HIV cannot reproduce outside the human body. It is not spread by:

- Air or water.
- Insects, including mosquitoes. Studies conducted by CDC researchers and others have shown no evidence of HIV transmission from insects.
- Saliva, tears, or sweat. There is no documented case of HIV being transmitted by spitting.
- Casual contact like shaking hands or sharing dishes.
- Closed-mouth or “social” kissing.

Tuberculosis

"TB" is short for tuberculosis. TB disease is caused by a bacterium called *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*. The bacteria usually attack the lungs, but TB bacteria can attack any part of the body such as the kidney, spine, and brain. If not treated properly, TB disease can be fatal.

TB is spread through the air from one person to another. The TB bacteria are put into the air when a person with active TB disease of the lungs or throat coughs, sneezes, speaks, or sings. People nearby may breathe in these bacteria and become infected.

TB is NOT spread by

- shaking someone's hand
- sharing food or drink
- touching bed linens or toilet seats
- sharing toothbrushes
- kissing

Not everyone infected with TB bacteria becomes sick. As a result, two TB-related conditions exist: latent TB infection and active TB disease.

- *Latent TB Infection*

TB bacteria can live in your body without making you sick. This is called **latent TB infection (LTBI)**. In most people who breathe in TB bacteria and become infected, the body is able to fight the bacteria to stop them from growing. People with latent TB infection do not feel sick and do not have any symptoms. The only sign of TB infection is a positive reaction to the [tuberculin skin test](#) or [special TB blood test](#). People with latent TB infection are not infectious and cannot spread TB bacteria to others. However, if TB bacteria become active in the body and multiply, the person will get sick with TB disease.

- *TB Disease*

TB bacteria become active if the immune system can't stop them from growing. When TB bacteria are active (multiplying in your body), this is called **TB disease**. TB disease will make you sick. People with TB disease may spread the bacteria to people they spend time with every day. Many people who have latent TB infection never develop TB disease. Some people develop TB disease soon after becoming infected (within weeks) before their immune system can fight the TB bacteria. Other people may get sick years later, when their immune system becomes weak for another reason.

For persons whose immune systems are weak, especially those with HIV infection, the risk of developing TB disease is much higher than for persons with normal immune systems.



Ride-Along Program Waiver of General Liability

In consideration of permission granted to participate in the Ride-Along Program and observe on an emergency apparatus as a guest of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue, I agree to assume all risks incident to such visits and agree that North Whatcom Fire & Rescue, its officers and employees will not be held responsible for any injuries or illness to my person or property that may arise from any cause or for any reason whatsoever during any visit. I agree to wear personal protective equipment made available to me by North Whatcom Fire & Rescue in any situation that could expose me to another person's body fluids.

I acknowledge that I have read the document titled "North Whatcom Fire & Rescue Ride-Along Program" and agree to abide by the directions stated in that document.

This waiver shall remain in effect for all visits occurring within one year following the date signed.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 201_____

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

Parent/Guardian is under the age of 18 (*Printed Name*): _____

Signature of Parent/Guardian if under age 18: _____



North Whatcom Fire & Rescue Ride-Along Program Confidentiality Agreement

I understand that under state and federal privacy laws, as a rider/observer with North Whatcom Fire & Rescue, I am considered part of the “work force” and privacy laws apply to me.

Initial _____

I understand that protected healthcare information (PHI) is anything that could possibly or reasonably identify a patient, regardless of how it is communicated. This includes, but is not limited to: name, address, social security number, birth date, insurance ID number, telephone number, medical conditions, dates of service, incident locations, license plate numbers or vehicle identification numbers.

Initial _____

I understand that electronic protected healthcare information (ePHI) is any PHI sent or received electronically. ePHI includes photographs, computers, telephone, faxes and radio.

Initial _____

I understand that I am not allowed to record or disclose any PHI, electronic or otherwise, to any person or entity not involved in the care of that patient.

Initial _____

I understand that I may not photograph, audio or video tape any patient without the permission of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue and the patient. If I wish to photograph or record a patient or their PHI, I agree to additional training with the departments Training Division, and that all photographs or recordings (physical or digital) are the property of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue, and that any such recording shall not be made public without the expressed written consent of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue.

Initial _____

I understand that disclosure of PHI or ePHI subjects me and North Whatcom Fire & Rescue to the possibility of civil and criminal investigation and penalties.

Initial _____

If I, at anytime, knowingly or inadvertently breach the confidentiality of a patient, I agree to notify the Officer or Training Captain of North Whatcom Fire & Rescue immediately.

Initial _____

I agree to comply with all confidentiality policies, procedures, and restrictions set forth by North Whatcom Fire & Rescue. Initial _____

Print Name: _____ Signature _____

Date: _____

Chief Jon Ahrenholz
North Whatcom Fire & Rescue
1507 E. Badger Rd.
PO Box 286
Lynden WA 98264
jahrenholz@nwfrs.com



North Whatcom Fire & Rescue Ride-Along Program Interest Form

Contact Information

Name: _____ Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Best way to contact you? _____

Purpose of the Ride -Along Request?

TO BE COMPLETED BY THE TRAINING DIVISION

Training Captain Approval: _____ Date: ___/___/20___

Ride Along Date: ___/___/20___ Officer Notified CrewSense Updated

Waiver of General Liability Form Confidentiality Agreement