

Media Relations

321.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for media releases and media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities.

321.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Chief of Police. However, in situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief of Police and in situations where the Chief of Police has given prior approval, Division Commanders, Shift Supervisors and the designated Media Relations representative may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable law.

321.2.1 MEDIA RELATIONS /COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The designated PIO is responsible for maintaining a relationship with the local community (e.g., local businesses, service clubs, schools, religious organizations, other government agencies) that is consistent with the goals and objectives of this department. The PIO shall maintain documentation on all public education efforts including classes, informational flyers and other documentation, meetings and press releases.

321.2.2 MEDIA REQUEST

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement situation shall be referred to the designated Department media representative. Prior to releasing any information to the media, employees shall consider the following:

- (a) At no time shall any employee of this department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from the Chief of Police or designee, or with approval to the designated Department media representative.
- (b) In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies or other criminal justice agencies including, but not limited to, prosecutors and coroners, every reasonable effort will be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to the release of any information by this department.
- (c) Under no circumstance should any member of this department make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police.

321.3 MEDIA ACCESS

Authorized members of the media should be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities. Access by the media is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.

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- (b) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
 - 1. Reasonable efforts should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the Media Relations or other designated spokesperson.
- (c) No member of this department shall be required to submit to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved employee and the Chief of Police or designee.
- (d) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody shall not be permitted unless in compliance with a jail facility policy.

A tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the news media shall be permitted within a safe staging area as determined by the Incident Commander. Department members shall not jeopardize a tactical operation in order to accommodate the news media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through the Incident Commander, or Chief of Police.

321.3.1 TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or officer safety or significantly hamper incident operations, the Incident Commander should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Incident Commander. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary surrounding the incident. The TFR should be requested through the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) by utilizing the NOTAM Flight Service Station at 877-487-6867. (14 CFR 91.137).

321.3.2 PROVIDING ADVANCE INFORMATION

To protect the safety and rights of officers and other persons, advance information about planned actions by law enforcement personnel, such as movement of persons in custody or the execution of an arrest or search warrant, will not be disclosed to the news media nor should media representatives be invited to be present at such actions except with the prior approval of the Chief of Police or designee.

Any exceptions to the above should only be considered for the furtherance of legitimate law enforcement purposes. Prior to approving any exception, the Chief of Police or designee will consider, at minimum, whether the release of information or presence of the media would unreasonably endanger any individual, prejudice the rights of any person or is otherwise prohibited by law.

321.4 SCOPE OF INFORMATION SUBJECT TO RELEASE

The Department will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities that shall be made available, upon request, to media representatives through the Records Manager. This log will consist of data classified as public information and should generally contain:

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- (a) The date, time, location, case number, type of crime, extent of injury or loss and names of individuals (not withstanding a legal exception or protection) involved in crimes occurring within this jurisdiction, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation.
- (b) The date, time, location, case number, name, birth date and charges for each person arrested by this department, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation.
- (c) The time and location of other significant law enforcement activities or requests for service with a brief summary of the incident subject to the restrictions of this policy and applicable law.

Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in this log shall be referred to the designated media representative, or the custodian of records. Such requests will be processed in accordance with policy and state law.

321.4.1 STATE RESTRICTED INFORMATION

It shall be the responsibility of the authorized employee dealing with media requests to ensure that restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media by this department (see the Records Maintenance and Release and the Personnel Files policies). When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be consulted.

321.5 RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The Department may routinely release information to the media without receiving a specific request. This may include media releases regarding critical incidents, information of public concern, updates regarding significant incidents or requests for public assistance in solving crimes or identifying suspects. This information may also be released through the department website or other electronic data sources.