



Approved:

*Chief Marcia Harnden*

Subject:

# 640. Media Relations

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## 640.1: 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.

## 640.2: POLICY

**It is the policy of the Albany Police Department to release information to the public via the media as appropriate on a case-by-case basis and in compliance with the law and best practices.**

## 640.3: RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Chief of Police. The Support Services Captain is designated as the Public Information Officer and reports directly to the Chief of Police.
- b. In situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief of Police and in situations where the Chief of Police has given prior approval, Division Captains, Watch Supervisors and designated Public Information Officer(s) may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable law.

### 640.3.1: MEDIA REQUESTS

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement situation shall be referred to the designated department media representative, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor. 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 a supervisor or the designated department media representative.
- b. In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to the release of any information by this department.

Under no circumstance should any member of this department make any comment(s) to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police.

**640.4: MEDIA ACCESS**

- a. Authorized members of the media should be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities subject to the following conditions:
  - 1) The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.
  - 2) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
    - A. Reasonable effort 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.
    - B. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the department Public Information Officer or other designated spokesperson.
  - 3) No member of this department who is under investigation should be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved employee.
  - 4) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody shall not be permitted without the approval of the Chief of Police and the express consent of the person in custody.
  - 5) Media representatives will not be allowed to enter the inner perimeter of a tactical situation or a crime scene while an incident or investigation is in progress.
  - 6) A tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except that the news media should be permitted within the outer perimeter of the scene, subject to any restrictions as set forth by the supervisor in charge.
  - 7) Department members shall not jeopardize a tactical operation in order to accommodate the news media.
  - 8) All comments to the media in a tactical operation shall be coordinated through a supervisor or the Public Information Officer.

**640.4.1: RELEASE OF 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, should 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.

- a. Any exceptions to the above should only be considered for the furtherance of legitimate law enforcement purposes.
- b. Prior to approving any exception the Chief of Police 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.

**640.4.2: TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS**

Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or officer safety or significantly hampers incident operations, the Shift Supervisor should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR), with the following in mind:

- a. All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Watch Supervisor;
- b. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident;
- c. The TFR should be requested through the appropriate control tower;
- d. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration should be contacted ([14 CFR 91.137](#)).

**640.5: INFORMATION SUBJECT TO RELEASE**

- a. A log of significant law enforcement activities will be made available, upon request, to media representatives. This log will generally contain the following information:
  - 1) The date, time, location, case number, type of crime, extent of injury or loss, and names of individuals (except confidential informants) 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.
  - 2) 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.
  - 3) 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.
- b. Identifying information concerning deceased individuals shall not be released to the media until notification of next of kin or otherwise cleared through the Medical Examiner's Office.
- c. Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in this log shall be referred to the designated department media representative, the custodian of records, or if unavailable, to the Watch Supervisor. Such requests will generally be processed in accordance with the provisions of this policy.

**640.5.1: RESTRICTED INFORMATION**

- a. It shall be the responsibility of the 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: Policy 601](#) and [Personnel Files: Policy 822](#)).
- b. Questions about the legality of releasing information should be referred to City legal counsel.