

Anchorage Police Department Regulations and Procedures Manual	Operational Procedures 3.07.005	
Policy and Procedure Title Public Information – News Engagement	Effective Date 10/6/2020	Page 1 of 4
Replaces Prior Policy: 12/12/2014	Approved by: Chief Justin Doll	

This policy is for departmental use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This policy should not be construed as creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.

3.07.005 Traditional News Media and Non-Traditional News Media Engagement

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a written directive which describes the Anchorage Police Department's policies, guidelines, and procedures regarding the release of information to the news media and the public.

POLICY

All APD employees shall treat all journalists respectfully while recognizing freedom of the press is an integral part to our system of governance and is guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Constitution of the State of Alaska.

APD employees shall make every reasonable effort to accommodate journalists' inquires and information requests to the extent it doesn't significantly detract from other duties, jeopardize criminal investigations or compromise the safety of the public and/or their fellow APD employees or violate APD policy.

All employees shall coordinate all requests with the APD's Community Relations Unit.

APD employees will refer to Chapter 3.90 in Municipal of Anchorage Code for complete information on access to public records.

PROCEDURE

I. INFORMATION RELEASE:

Approval of all information release or interviews will be granted if an investigation or operational procedures will not be jeopardized, the safety of the public or APD employees will not be compromised, and/or complies and supports Municipality of Anchorage ordinances, State of Alaska laws, and federal laws.

A. Identifications:

1. Identification of living crime victims or people associated with an investigation such as a traffic investigation will not be released by APD employees unless it aids in the investigation or is in the best interest of the public and APD. Non-specific information such as gender or age are permitted if it meets standards as stated above. This is to ensure their privacy is protected, the investigation is not jeopardized and complies/supports the law. These requests will be referred to the Records Department for further processing in accordance with public record laws.
2. Identification of deceased victims (name, age, gender, race, and residential location (town/city and/or state only). will not be released by APD employees until 24 hours after next-of-kin procedures are completed. This is to ensure families have an opportunity to process the information. Juveniles, victims of sexual assault and victims of domestic violence may never be released by APD employees, regardless of next-of-kin procedures, to ensure APD complies with and supports the intention of the law. These requests will be referred to the Records Department for further processing in accordance with public record laws.
 - a). If residential location is unknown/undetermined, the term undetermined will be used instead of homeless.
 - b). Information about cause of death may be released with approval from the case detective, supervisor or commander.
 - i. For suicides, no additional details other than suicide as the cause may be released by APD employees. These requests will be referred to the Records Department for further processing in accordance with public record laws.
3. Identification of witnesses will not be released. Exceptions will be coordinated with the investigating officer, their supervisor, the Chief of Police, the Municipality of Anchorage Attorney and/or the Anchorage District Attorney of Alaska.
4. Identification of a person of interest (individuals believed to be involved in a crime and not charged or have information about a crime) may be released with approval from a supervisor or commander.
5. Identification of and information about a suspect/defendant (a person arrested or facing charges) may be released according to the following:
 - a). Name, age, gender, race, and residential location (town/city and/or state only). If residential location is unknown/undetermined, the term undetermined will be used instead of homeless.
 - b). Exact charges
 - c). Citations issued and the offense
 - d). Information about the character, reputation or criminal history/arrest record may not be released.

- e). Information contained in sealed court documents may not be released
- f). Information about the assumed guilt or innocence may not be released

B. Investigations:

1. Information about circumstances that **may** be released are:
 - a). A brief synopsis of the incident
 - b). APD case number
 - c). Date and time of call and/or report
 - d). Location
 - i. Residential addresses may not be released; only general block number
 - e). General descriptions of injuries or damages
 - i. Exact locations of injuries or damages may not be released unless approved by a supervisor or commander
 - ii. APD Employees will only release injury locations as upper body or lower body
 - f). General health information that doesn't violate the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and aids in the investigation
 - i. Medical/health condition updates of injured people will not be released unless they become deceased or aids in the investigation
 - g). General estimate of property damage
 - h). Descriptions of unidentified suspects or vehicles may be released with approval from investigating officer
 - i). Method of report (officer observation, citizen, warrant, tip...etc)
 - i. Crime Stoppers assistance in an investigation should always be released
 - j). Names of partner organizations involved in an investigation
2. Information about circumstances that **may not** be released are:
 - a). Exact identifying information about a weapon or other physical evidence or any information that could be known only to the guilty party.
 - b). Amount of money stolen
 - c). Speculation
 - d). Misleading or false information
 - e). Confessions or acts of assistance by the accused
 - f). Remarks about the assumed guilt or innocence of the accused
 - g). Remarks about the credibility of testimony
 - h). Informant information
 - i). Details of a tip unless authorized by a commander
 - i. Crime Stopper tip information may never be released
 - j). Evidence unless authorized by a commander

- k). Photographs unless authorized by the investigating officer or supervisor
- l). Name of hospital where a victim or suspect was transported

C. Photographs and Video

1. Traditional and non-traditional media may access a location like any other member of the public. Where the public has access, the media has access.
2. Traditional and non-traditional media may take photographs and/or record video of any scene if they do not endanger the public, police officers, themselves, or evidence. If the scene is on private property, the photographer or videographer must obtain permission from the property owner directly. Photographers and videographers must abide by restrictions imposed by the courts or utilize telephoto photography from a vantage point accessible to the public.
3. Suspects will not be posed by officers.
4. Officers will not allow journalists to accompany them as they enter a location to execute search or arrest warrants. The warrant authorizes only law enforcement officials to make entry.
5. The CRU may take and/or release non-evidentiary photographs and/or video in the interest of the public.

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