

# AURORA POLICE DEPARTMENT

## DIRECTIVES MANUAL

8.6	EFFECTIVE: September 1, 1998	Daniel J. Oates, Chief of Police
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SUBJECT: PUBLIC INFORMATION		
REFERENCES:		
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### 8.6 PUBLIC INFORMATION

Among the most important elements of the implementation of the Aurora Police Department's Community Policing philosophy is a positive and productive relationship with all areas of the community. A key factor in maintaining a cooperative and effective community partnership is a constructive and mutually beneficial working relationship with the news media. The media play an important and necessary role in society, and are among the most influential resources available to the police department and the citizenry. Public support and cooperation are crucial to the achievement of the police department's goals and objectives. The news media is a valuable resource in the dissemination of information to the public, whether regarding the police department's mission of community service, or requesting assistance during a criminal investigation. The public's confidence and high regard of the Aurora Police Department is a direct result of a successful and cooperative daily relationship with news media. Each member of the Aurora Police Department is, as such, a representative of the department to the community, and to the news media as well. A professional, courteous, and helpful demeanor will be of invaluable support in maintaining the Aurora Police Department's reputation for excellence in community policing.

#### 8.6.1 Public Information Officer(s) (P.I.O.)

The Public Information Officer (P.I.O.) is selected by the Chief of Police and serves in that capacity at the Chief's discretion.

#### 8.6.2 Duties and Responsibilities of the Public Information Officer

Acts as the primary liaison between the Department and the various news media on a 24-hour on call basis.

Receives all P.I.O. calls from the Patrol Lieutenant and determines proper disposition.

Completes the "News Release" form (see attached) on each P.I.O. incident, makes the necessary media notifications, distributes copies to the Chief of Police, the Patrol Lieutenant, the assigned case investigator (for the case file), and maintains a file copy.

Has responsibility for supervising activities of the news media at the scene of a crime or other events that are under the control of Department personnel.

- (a) In the absence of the P.I.O., this responsibility will lie with the officer in command at the scene.

Initiates news releases and articles regarding awards, promotions, commendations, etc., received by members of the Department.

Initiates news articles regarding the Department itself and the Bureaus contained therein.

Arranges meetings with news media representatives to facilitate suggestions for possible solutions to problems relating to police-news media relations and/or procedures.

#### 8.6.3 P.I.O. Calls

Definition - P.I.O. calls are those calls the Public Information Officer feels are newsworthy and should be released to the news media and/or those calls/events which the Department feels are news worthy.

Example - Officer involved shootings, homicides, attempt homicides, unusual sexual assaults, fatal accidents, disasters, unusual kidnappings, hostage situations, use of SWAT, high speed chases that are lengthy or involve serious injury or death, unusual robberies, acts of heroism demonstrated by officers, and other human interest stories.

- (a) The above examples serve only as guidelines. Other incidents may occur that will require the notification of the P.I.O.

#### 8.6.4 Sources of Police Information

- (a) Patrol Lieutenants and Other Members

- The Patrol Lieutenant or designee, using 8.6.3 - P.I.O. Calls as a guideline, will inform the P.I.O. of all calls that are newsworthy.
- The P.I.O. will contact whoever they deem appropriate to gather information on any significant arrests, e.g., homicides, unusual or numerous sexual assaults, numerous armed robberies, large narcotics seizures, large-scale gambling, or prostitution.
- Supervisors will inform the P.I.O. of imminent arrests as described in the above paragraph.
- All formal requests of any member for an interview by the news media will receive prior approval by the Chief of Police, Deputy Chief of Police, Public

Information Officer, or a designee of the Chief or Deputy Chief of Police. Although individual members may not be prohibited from contacts with media representatives when acting as private citizens, members will not act as representatives of, or “spokespersons” for, the police department without the prior approval of the Chief of Police or the above designees. Contingent upon authorization to participate in the interview, members are not to discuss matters of police department policy, engage in speculative statements, or offer any personal opinions. When participating in media interviews, members are strongly encouraged to project a professional image, since the member will be viewed as a representative of the entire Aurora Police Department.

(b) Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD)

- PSCD supervisors will be allowed to release the type, location, and time of call to media personnel who inquire about specific incidents.

If the Patrol Lieutenant or designee is not available, it will be the responsibility of the PSCD Supervisor to notify the P.I.O.

8.6.5 Department Cooperation at Crime Scenes or Other Events

Command personnel and officers will cooperate with, rather than alienate, the media.

(a) Cooperation with the Public Information Officer

- The P.I.O. will receive the full cooperation of all officers and specifically, the officer in charge, who will ensure that all significant information is given to the P.I.O. in a timely manner.
- Upon the arrival of the P.I.O., all Department information will be channeled through them to the news media.
- The state of modern high technology communications has made it possible for the local news media to be constantly monitoring available police communications frequencies and talk groups. Additionally, the monitoring of police communications has become imperative for the local media entities, both print and broadcast, to survive in a very competitive media market.
- Such conditions make it highly probable that news media representatives, reporters and videographers, will rapidly arrive at crime scenes or other major events.
- Members of the news media have the same rights and privileges to be present at any location where any other citizen is allowed by officers at a scene. This right is a legal one, and is not altered by the fact that the media representative

is utilizing a camera or other recording equipment. In fact, special arrangements may be made at various scenes to afford the media a more advantageous vantage point to cover the event. When it becomes unclear whether media are to be allowed to occupy a specific area or location, contact the supervisory officer on scene, or the Public Information Officer if available at the scene.

- Because the preservation and collection of physical evidence or the security of a crime scene or major incident are crucial, it is imperative that a perimeter is established as quickly as practical, whether by crime scene tape or other suitable means. If members of the media are to be denied access to a specific area, all non-essential individuals should be prohibited from that area. The denial of access or the freedom of movement in any area at a scene, which is under police control, should be accompanied by a courteous explanation, to media and citizens alike, as to the reasons and justifications for prohibition from the location.
- While at a crime scene or major incident, members of the media have the legal right to photograph or record by any method, any individual or any object that is in public view. Additionally, they have the right to attempt to talk with anyone. It then becomes the responsibility of the Public Information Officer, or designee of the Chief of Police, to make a formal request, with reasonable justification, that the media not broadcast or print certain images or other such information which may jeopardize the integrity of an investigation, subsequent prosecution of a criminal matter or for the physical or emotional welfare of an individual. This request will also be made to make every reasonable attempt to comply with the protection of the identities of juvenile suspects, victims of sexual assault, etc.
- News media representatives do, however, have a legal right to be on private property with the consent of the owner of that property. In such cases, permission must be granted by the owner of the property, and cannot be granted by members of the Aurora Police Department.

(b) Multi-Agency Situations

- When multiple agencies (i.e., Fire Department, other law enforcement agencies, etc.) are involved in a police related situation, the P.I.O. or appropriate command personnel will coordinate the release of information.
- The Aurora Police Department will not improperly infringe upon any other agency's expertise by issuing unauthorized news releases on their behalf.

8.6.6 Information that May be Released to the Media

When a call is received and dispatched, and the news media subsequently calls asking for information, the PSCD Supervisor may release the following information.

- (a) Type of call as reported.
- (b) Give the approximate location of the incident and the exact location of the press staging area.
- (c) Advise the media that any further information will have to be released by the P.I.O., Patrol Lieutenant or designee, or command officer at the scene.

The following procedure applies from the time a person becomes the subject of an incident or investigation until said incident or investigation is terminated by trial or disposition. Personnel of the Aurora Police Department, subject to the needs of the investigation and limitations set by law or by court rule or order, may make public the following information.

- (a) An arrestee's or warrant subject's "basic identification information", which means their name, sex, date of birth, last known address, physical description, place of employment, and Aurora criminal history.
- (b) The text and source of the charge(s) for which the subject is being held.
- (c) The amount of the bond.
- (d) The approximate location of the offense or occurrence.
- (e) The circumstances immediately surrounding the arrest, including time and place of arrest, resistance, and pursuit at the time of the arrest (without relating their possible evidentiary value).

#### 8.6.7 Information that May Not be Released to the Media

Background material or information relating to the arrest or investigation that would jeopardize the investigation.

Any statement or information that could reasonably be expected to influence or prejudice the outcome of a trial including subjective observations. Observations concerning the subject's character, statements, refusal or failure to make a statement or perform a test or submit to an examination or the results of such tests or examination.

Statements concerning the identity, address, testimony or credibility of prospective witnesses.

Any opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the subject or the possibility of plea negotiations.

Any information concerning the subject's prior criminal record, except for Aurora criminal history.

The name or address of any victim of a sex offense; only the approximate location of where the offense took place should be released.

Any information except age, sex, and personal identification information regarding a person under the age of eighteen or information pertaining to a child abuse or neglect case.

Exact amount of cash loss in a robbery or a burglary, nor the specific description of the valuables taken.

Information regarding the victim in a death investigation.

Any information concerning internal investigations of police or civilian personnel without express permission of the Chief of Police.

Interviews with, or posed photographs of, the subject without the express permission of the prosecutor's office.

#### 8.6.8 Metropolitan Emergency Telephone System (METS)

The METS line is a specially designed system used for informing the news media of emergencies, news advisories and news releases. The following are definitions of terms as used in reference to the METS line.

- (a) News Advisory: A newsworthy event is happening, but details are not available at this time. The media may desire to cover it at this point. The cooperation of the media may be requested to gain a solution to a problem.

The media should be advised on the circumstances surrounding the event and informed of an approximate time that a news release will be made.

- (b) News Release: A newsworthy event has occurred and pertinent facts are included in the release based on guidelines.
- (c) Emergency: A disaster situation such as an explosion, flood, plane crash, tornado, or severe weather conditions, etc., where word of the situation must be relayed to the public as soon as possible, primarily for life-safety reasons. It may also be used to obtain assistance from other Metropolitan Law Enforcement or Civil Agencies on major situations.
- (d) Talk-Listen Capability: A METS line between law enforcement and civil defense agencies where all users have the capability of two-way telephone conversations.

- (e) Listen Only Capability: A METS line on which the user can listen but not engage in any conversation. This primarily is for the news media.
- (f) Subscriber List: A list of all agencies participating in the Metropolitan Emergency Telephone System, copy attached. Changes will occur and an updated list can be obtained through the Denver Office of Emergency Preparedness.

#### 8.6.9 Authorized Use of METS

The Public Information Officer or the Patrol Lieutenant or designee will determine when use of the METS line is appropriate.

The METS telephone is kept and monitored in the PSCD. The Public Information Officer or the Patrol Lieutenant or designee may request that a dispatcher or PSCD Supervisor make a METS news advisory, news release, or emergency notification.

- (a) The Public Information Officer or the Patrol Lieutenant or designee will instruct PSCD Personnel of the content of the broadcast.
- (b) The Public Information Officer or the Patrol Lieutenant or designee will ensure that the METS broadcast is in compliance with department policy and procedure for release of news and public items.

#### 8.6.10 METS News Advisory, News Release and Emergency Notification Forms

These forms will be used to release information over the METS telephone to ensure the message is kept brief but the necessary information is included.

A supply of these forms will be kept in the PSCD near the METS telephone.

The forms are designed to be flexible. There may be additions or deletions as necessary.

A copy of each form is attached at the end of this directive.

#### 8.6.11 Use of the METS Instrument

Specific instructions for use of the METS telephone are as follows:

- (a) **INCOMING CALLS**: When the METS phone rings, do not press the talk button, listen only. If the call is for our agency press the talk button and acknowledge.
- (b) **OUTGOING CALLS**: If we are originating the call, follow the steps below:

- Remove handset and listen for dial tone - dial METS activation code "20#". After short delay (2-4 seconds) dial desired zone code (there will be a series of relay closures and tones). After an appropriate delay (10-20 seconds), start your announcement. Receiving stations will only ring for a maximum of 1.5 minutes. Please respond promptly to circuit activations.
- State: "This is the Aurora Police Department, we have an emergency message to announce in 30 seconds, or a news advisory to announce in 30 seconds, or a news release to announce in 30 seconds."
- Repeat the above once and hang up the phone.
- Repeat the message after five seconds, and spell to ensure clarity.
- Close by stating your name and the agency.
- News media may put the message on tape to be used on the air. Background noise should be held to a minimum or eliminated.

#### 8.6.12 METS Subscriber List

- (a) The following list of agencies have talk-listen capability (activators) and are assigned to ZONE 11.
- Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department
  - Arvada Police Department
  - Aurora Communication Center
  - Broomfield Department of Public Safety
  - City of Littleton Communications Center
  - Colorado State Patrol
  - Denver Fire Alarm Headquarters
  - Denver Fire Personnel
  - Denver Health Medical Center
  - Denver Office of Emergency Preparedness
  - Denver Police Department
  - Division of Disaster Emergency Services
  - Jefferson County Emergency Operations
  - Jefferson County Sheriff's Department



- Lakewood Communications Center
  - National Weather Service
  - Public Service Company of Colorado
  - Rockwell Corporation (Rocky Flats)
  - Rocky Mountain Arsenal
  - Rocky Mountain Poison Control
  - Denver International Airport
  - St. Anthony's Hospital System
- (b) The following list of agencies have either listen only or talk-listen capability and are assigned to ZONE 12.
- Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department
  - Arvada Police Department
  - Associated Press
  - Aurora Public Safety Communications Department (PSCD) Center
  - Broomfield Department of Public Safety
  - City of Littleton Communications Center
  - Colorado State Patrol
  - Denver Fire Alarm Headquarters
  - Denver Post, Inc.
  - Denver Fire Personnel
  - Denver Health Medical Center
  - Denver Police Department
  - Division of Disaster Emergency Services
  - Denver Office of Emergency Preparedness
  - Jefferson County Emergency Operations
  - Jefferson County Sheriff's Department
  - KCFR
  - KCNC - Channel 4
  - KNKO
  - KHOW

- KIMN - KYGO
- KMGH - Channel 7
- KNUS
- KOA Radio
- KUSA - Channel 9
- KWGN - Channel 2
- Lakewood Communications Center
- Metro Traffic Control
- National Weather Service
- Public Service Company of Colorado
- Rocky Mountain Poison Control
- Rockwell Corporation (Rocky Flats)
- Rocky Mountain News
- Rocky Mountain Arsenal
- Denver International Airport
- St. Anthony's Hospital System
- UPI (United Press International)

(c) The following list of agencies have only listen capability (receivers) and are assigned to ZONE 18.

- Denver Post, Inc.
- Metro Traffic Control
- Rocky Mountain News
- Associated Press
- UPI (United Press International)
- KUSA - Channel 9
- KMGH - Channel 7
- KCNC - Channel 4
- KWGN - Channel 2
- KCFR
- KNKC

- KNUS
- KHOW
- KIMN - KYGO
- KOA Radio

#### 8.6.13 Sharing Radio Frequencies

The Aurora Police Department does not provide local news groups with radio equipment. Programming may be provided to enable “listen” capabilities to news groups with privately owned hardware. Requestors will be advised to submit a written request, on the news agency letterhead to the Chief of Police.

Requests for programming require approval from the Chief of Police or designee. Once approved, the requests will be processed through the Electronic Support Section. The Electronic Support Section has the responsibility of notifying the requestor of the status of the request and coordinating the programming with the Radio Shops and the requestor. Additionally, the Electronic Support Section will track all outside programming to ensure that all users receive periodic upgrades to the radio programming.

On a case by case basis, requests for “talk” capabilities may be reviewed by the Chief of Police or designee(s). Written approval from the Chief of Police is required before any programming is completed.

The Electronic Support Section will maintain a permanent archive of all requests.