



# Colorado Springs Police Department Standard Operating Procedure

## DL-1690-01 Media Responsibilities for Patrol Operations Bureau

### Section 1600 – Information Systems & Police Records

Effective Date: 6/23/2021

Supersedes Date: 7/31/2008

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#### **.01 Purpose**

The purpose of this directive is to establish the procedures for the Patrol Operations Bureau in providing information to the news media and for media ride-alongs.

#### **.02 Cross Reference**

[GO 1550 Public Information Office and News Media Information and Records](#)

[GO 1131 Enhanced Tactical Communications System](#)

[P1-32 Ride-Along Program](#)

#### **.03 Definitions**

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#### **.04 Procedure**

The Patrol Operations Bureau engages in police-related matters twenty-four hours a day. Frequently the news media seeks information concerning incidents handled by patrol. Generally, the media will be provided information from patrol through the police blotter (ETACS), telephone interviews, and/or in-person interviews either at the scene of an incident or at a police facility.

Patrol Operations Bureau Supervisors will be the primary sources of information on all incidents where the initial response and preliminary investigation is handled by patrol regardless of the time of day or day of the week.

The Public Affairs Section can be a resource for supervisors in providing guidance, but the release of information and requested interviews will be the responsibility of patrol supervisors.

The media relies on three primary sources to become aware of newsworthy incidents. First, most media outlets scan all radio traffic. Second, several media outlets make "beat calls" to the patrol division duty desks. The third source is through ETACS.

Patrol lieutenants will emphasize the value of media relations with all personnel assigned to their shift. They will ensure that all sergeants assigned to their shift cordially assist media personnel with their inquiries.

Media ride-alongs are requested regularly and should be facilitated through the the Public Information Office (PIO). Lieutenants and sergeants will use their discretion in determining whether the ride-along should be with a supervisor or with a patrol officer. Only one media representative may ride with a patrol officer, however, in some circumstances where the request is to have both a reporter and cameraman ride, the best option may be to utilize a supervisor instead. The CSPD Release and Indemnification Agreement for Media Ride-Alongs will be signed by the media representative prior to commencing the ride-along.

## **Duty Desk Responsibilities to Media**

All incoming media calls to each division will be directed to the duty desk. If the duty desk is not staffed by a supervisor, then the call will be routed to a supervisor. Supervisors will be responsible to identify themselves to the media caller.

If the call is related to an in-progress call, then the supervisor will provide the nature of the call and the location unless it is a covert operation and an immediate release of information would jeopardize the specific investigation.

If the call is related to a blotter entry or other incident occurring within that division, the supervisor is responsible for researching and providing any available information that is releasable, regardless of what shift the incident occurred. In the case where a supervisor needs to research the information or refer it to another on-duty supervisor, they will provide the name of the person that will call them back.

If the media is requesting either a telephone or on-camera interview stemming from a patrol related incident, the on-duty lieutenant or sergeant will accommodate that request regardless of the shift the incident occurred. In general, these interviews only require a reporting of the information provided on ETACS. In cases where several media outlets are asking for interviews, it may be advisable for the supervisor to advise the media that one interview will be given at a specific time and location.

## **On Scene Responsibilities**

Incidents where the initial response and preliminary investigation will be handled by patrol that draw the interest of the media, should be handled by patrol supervisor on scene. If there is no supervisor on scene, one should respond to provide the relevant information to the media and to accommodate requests for interviews.

If an on-scene supervisor has questions or concerns as to what information should be released, they may consult with the Public Affairs Section or contact the on-call PIO during evenings or weekends.

## **Media Access at Crime Scenes**

Members of the department will cooperate whenever possible with the news media at the scene of any crime, but will refer requests for information either to the on scene PIO or designated patrol supervisor.

When a scene is secured, the following guidelines will be adhered to:

- Members of the media will not be allowed access to any area in which it is possible that evidence may be damaged, destroyed, altered or compromised until the evidence has been photographed and processed by the appropriate departmental personnel, and the evidence has been removed or secured.
- Media personnel will not be allowed access to any area, if access would disrupt tactical police plans or operations, or would endanger the life of, or present a substantial possibility of injury to any person.
- Do not establish artificial barriers for the media. For example, do not establish a press location a block from the scene while allowing the general public to freely wander within a closer confined area.
- Do not prevent the taking of pictures, videotaping, or interviews of persons by the media while in public places.
- Members of the news media, including photographers, will not be allowed access to private property if the owner or agent of that property requests that they be excluded.
- Do not limit media access solely because of the risk of injury or death to that media member; however, the media member should be advised of the nature and scope of danger before being granted access. Examples of this might include public assemblies or demonstrations.

## Releasable Information

The release of information is governed by law and certain types of information are required to be released. Guidelines for the release of information are, as follows:

- An arrestee's name, age, sex, residence (use a hundred block instead of specific address), occupation, date, time, and place of arrest, except the name and residence of a juvenile. Do not include the race of an arrestee unless it is specifically relevant to the investigation.
- The substance, text, and source of the charge, or charges, on which the arrestee is being held.
- The identity of the investigating and/or arresting officers.
- Physical evidence seized, which if disclosed will not harm the investigation.
- When providing descriptions of wanted persons, provide as much identifying information as possible including physical descriptions, clothing, and any vehicle information.

While the Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) is not bound by HIPPA regulations, it is best practice to limit the disclosure of injuries in both criminal cases and traffic accidents to general conditions such as Critical, Serious, Fair, etc.

Guidelines: The following guidelines will be used in determining restrictions upon the release of information to the news media:

- If background material or information relating to an arrest or investigation would further jeopardize an investigation, such information will not be released.
- Any statement or information that could reasonably be expected, through dissemination by the news media, to adversely and unfairly prejudice the outcome of a pending trial or other judicial proceeding, will not be released except by the specific authorization of the Chief of police.
- Information that may tend to create an atmosphere of prejudice, without serving a significant public information function, will not be released.
- Disclosures will not involve subjective observations or speculation.

The following types of information will not be released:

- Do not provide the name of a suspect until either an arrest has been made or an Arrest Warrant has been signed by a Judge.

- Observations concerning the arrestee's character.
- Statements, admissions, confessions, or alibis attributable to an arrestee, or the refusal or failure of the arrestee to make a statement.
- Information concerning the identity, address, statements, or credibility of any prospective witness or victim. However, an indication may be made that witnesses' statements do or do not corroborate the department's investigation of the matter.
- Any opinion as to the guilt of the arrestee, or the possibility of a plea or plea negotiations.
- Any information concerning an arrestee's prior criminal record without the express authorization of both the Custodian of Records, or designee and the Public Affairs Section.
- The name, address, or telephone number of any victim of a sex offense. Note: The age and sex of the victim of a sex offense may be released, as can an indication of the general area where the offense occurred.
- The identification of any person under the age of eighteen (18), who is the suspect in any investigation, or who has been taken into custody, except for traffic or Game and Fish violations. It is permitted to release the age and sex of such persons.
- Information concerning the amount of cash loss in a robbery or burglary, a specific description of valuables other than in general categories, or any other information when it will most probably lead to a recurrence of a crime. Note, however, that it may be beneficial to release such information as the number and descriptions of credit cards, money orders, checks, etc.
- Information about the victim in death investigations, until authorized by the officer in charge of the investigation. The coroner's arrival on the scene and pronouncement of death do not themselves constitute authorization. Before authorization, all requests for such information will be referred to the officer in charge of the investigation or the Public Affairs Section.
- Any information concerning a department personnel investigation without the express authorization of the chief of police. This information will then be disseminated by the Public Affairs Section only. All requests for this information will be referred to the Public Affairs Section.
- News media interviews of subjects while in department custody will not be granted, nor will the news media be allowed to photograph subjects within any department buildings.

- Reports of child abuse or neglect, and the name and address of any child, family, or informant or any other identifying information contained in such reports, pursuant to CRS § 19-1-307.

Any time a representative of the news media is denied access to certain information as outlined above, s/he will be given a courteous explanation of the reasons for the denial.

## **Resolving Patrol/Media Concerns**

Each patrol division commander will designate one lieutenant in their division that will be designated the responsibility to address media concerns that arise from their respective division. That lieutenant will look into any complaints made by members of the media concerning a lack of compliance with this procedure. In addition, the patrol supervisors will inform the lieutenant of problems and/or concerns regarding the actions or behavior of specific members of the media. This includes but is not limited to anytime a member of the media fails to obey any lawful order or instruction from any department member.

Complaints from the media that appear to violate this procedure will be handled through the normal personnel process. Complaints on members of the media will be forwarded to the Public Affairs Section for appropriate action.

## **Request for Reports**

No case report or other form of documentation will be released to the media by any member of the Patrol Operations Bureau without specific permission from the Public Affairs Section. All releasable reports must go through a redaction process and are subject to fees as established by City Council. Media requests for case reports or other documentation should be referred to the Public Information Officer or to the CSPD website, where online record requests can be made.

## **Media Ride-Along Guidelines**

The CSPD has an established ride-along program available to the public, and as such, the media may also request to ride along with members of the Patrol Operations Bureau. The following guidelines will be adhered to when a member of the media completes a ride-along with the CSPD:

- The member of the media must complete and sign the CSPD Release and Indemnification Agreement prior to the ride-along. Background checks are not required for local media reporters or photographers as long as they produce identification from a locally recognized media outlet.
- The PIO, or their representative must be notified before any media ride along.

- Unless approved to ride with a supervisor, only one media representative is authorized to ride with an assigned officer during a ride-along.
- Civilian ride-along observers, including but not limited to any member of the news media, will NOT be permitted to accompany an officer on official business into a private dwelling or a private business that is not open to the general public without the prior, specific permission of the owner or legal occupant of that property. This restriction applies to calls for service, execution of search or arrest warrants, and any other time the officer enters private premises under color of police authority. Officers may verbally request permission as circumstances permit, however will not allow civilian riders onto the premises until granted. Riders not granted permission will be directed by the officer to remain in the police vehicle or other safe location. Ride-along observers are not restricted from accompanying officers into public places, consistent with safety considerations for both the observer and officer.
- Any audio or video recordings of criminal activities that potentially have evidentiary value that are obtained while participating in an approved ride-along may become evidence in any subsequent criminal proceedings. If this situation occurs, the recording may be duplicated in its original form so that it may be submitted into evidence.
- In the event a person is arrested and transported by the officer conducting a ride-along, no recordings are permitted once the person is placed in a police vehicle unless specific authorization is obtained by the arrestee if he/she is an adult. In the case of a juvenile arrest, no recordings are authorized.
- In the event a member of the media fails to comply with any of these guidelines or any other directions given by the officer, the ride-along will be immediately terminated and the rider will be transported back to the division and the appropriate supervisor will be advised of the circumstances

## **Attachment**

[CSPD Release and Indemnification Agreement for Media Ride-Alongs](#)