

Media Relations

324.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the release of official department information to the media. It also addresses coordinating media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies, and other law enforcement activities.

324.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Garden Grove Police Department to protect the privacy rights of individuals, while releasing non-confidential information to the media regarding topics of public concern. Information that has the potential to negatively affect investigations will not be released.

324.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Chief of Police. In situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief of Police and in situations where the Chief of Police has given prior approval, Bureau Commanders, Division Lieutenants, and designated Public Information Officer(s) may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable laws regarding confidentiality.

324.3.1 RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The breakdown of the media team and terminology is as follows: There will be a "Primary" Spokesperson or Public Information Officer (PIO) for the department. The Administrative Sergeant will be responsible to coordinate information releases from the Office of the Chief of Police. The two Division Lieutenants will be the designated spokesperson unless they designate otherwise. On days that the primary PIO or backup PIO is unavailable, the duty of releasing information to the media will be the responsibility of a field sergeant. The field sergeant can designate an employee to disseminate information to the media.

It shall be the responsibility of the designated or assigned spokesperson to prepare and release factual information to the news media regarding all major departmental incidents, major crimes, or other newsworthy events. The responsibility for preparation of a news release may be delegated to a supervisor, officer or member of the department that has firsthand knowledge of the event or topic. In situations involving a major incident, the Division Lieutenant will coordinate with the primary PIO to determine who will represent the department.

In the case of feature stories, "in-depth" articles or series that require significant department time and effort, it will be the responsibility of the primary PIO to coordinate and release this information to the media. Realizing that these stories may involve information from a variety of sources, the primary spokesperson will gather information through coordination with Bureau, Division and/or Unit Commander or their designees.

The assigned spokesperson may act as a liaison between the media and the department in arranging for or coordinating news conferences. News releases will be completed on the Garden

Garden Grove Police Department

Policy Manual

Media Relations

Grove Police Department computer network and made available to the media as warranted. The primary PIO will be responsible for maintaining and upgrading the list of "Media Contacts."

324.4 MEDIA REQUESTS

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement incident shall be referred to the PIO, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor. Prior to releasing any information to the media, members shall consider the following:

- (a) At no time shall any member of this department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from a supervisor or the PIO.
- (b) In situations involving multiple agencies or government departments, 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.
- (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. Under these circumstances the member should direct the media to the agency handling the incident.

324.5 ACCESS

Authorized media representatives shall be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies, and other law enforcement activities as required by law.

Access by the media is subject to the following conditions (Penal Code § 409.5(d)):

- (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. THE GARDEN GROVE POLICE DEPARTMENT DOES NOT ISSUE PRESS PASSES TO NEWS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES; HOWEVER, PRESS PASSES ISSUED BY ALLIED AGENCIES SHALL BE HONORED. "Freelance" reporters or photographers will not be considered as authorized news media representatives for the purpose of this policy. Media representatives may not bring or facilitate the transport of an unauthorized person into a closed area unless it is for the safety of the person.
- (b) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
 - 1. Based upon available resources, 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. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the PIO or other designated spokesperson.
- (c) No member of this department who is under investigation shall be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved member (Government Code § 3303(e)).

Garden Grove Police Department

Policy Manual

Media Relations

- (d) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody should not be permitted without the approval of the Chief of Police and the express consent of the person in custody.
- (e) Department members shall not decline the rescue of news media personnel who are in danger, but they will not provide an escort into or out of dangerous areas. In general, authorized members of the news media are to be permitted free movement in the area as long as they do not hamper, deter, or interfere with law enforcement or public safety functions.
- (f) News media representatives have no right of access to private property greater than the general public and therefore are subject to any public access restrictions of the owner or person in charge of the property when a crime scene is located on private property.
- (g) Representatives of the media participating in a ride-along will not be permitted to accompany an officer into any residence.

324.5.1 CRITICAL OPERATIONS

A critical incident or tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the media should not be permitted within the inner perimeter of the incident, subject to any restrictions as determined by the supervisor in charge. Department members shall not jeopardize a critical incident or tactical operation in order to accommodate the media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through a supervisor or the PIO.

324.5.2 TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or member safety or significantly hamper incident operations, the field supervisor should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Division Lieutenant. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident and should be requested through the appropriate control tower. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should be contacted (14 CFR 91.137).

324.6 PROVIDING ADVANCE INFORMATION

To protect the safety and rights of department members 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 media, nor should media representatives be invited to be present at such actions except with the prior approval of the Chief of Police.

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 will consider, at a 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.

Garden Grove Police Department

Policy Manual

Media Relations

324.7 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.

324.7.1 RELEASE OF INFORMATION INVOLVING MULTIPLE AGENCIES

For incidents involving the mutual efforts of the Garden Grove Police Department and any other department or agency, the ranking department supervisor present at the scene shall confer with the ranking personnel from all other departments or agencies involved, to determine who shall be responsible for the release of information to the news media. Generally, the agency having primary jurisdiction shall bear responsibility for the dissemination of information.

324.8 CONFIDENTIAL OR RESTRICTED INFORMATION

It shall be the responsibility of the PIO to ensure that confidential or restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media (see the Records Maintenance and Release and Personnel Records policies). When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be consulted prior to releasing any information.

324.8.1 EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

The identities of officers involved in shootings or other critical incidents may only be released to the media upon the consent of the involved officer or upon a formal request filed.

Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information, including the identity of officers involved in shootings or other critical incidents, shall be referred to the PIO.

Requests should be reviewed and fulfilled by the Custodian of Records, or if unavailable, the Division Lieutenant or the authorized designee. Such requests will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Records Maintenance and Release Policy and public records laws.

324.9 CATEGORIES OF INFORMATION RELEASE

Routine - These are reports of incidents of human interest, which would not affect the normal police operations.

Major - These are reports of incidents that create a large volume of news inquiries, which impact normal police operations. The Division Lieutenant or designee will coordinate with the primary spokesperson PIO and decide when to initiate a major news release.

Policy News Release - These are reports about the internal operations of the police department. News releases about policy originate from the Chief's office. In most cases, the primary PIO or designee will make such a release directly to the media, at the direction of the Chief of Police.

Publicity Releases - These involve incidents and programs designed to arouse public interest, understanding, or involvement. These reports are coordinated by the Division Lieutenant or designee or by the primary PIO.

Garden Grove Police Department

Policy Manual

Media Relations

Newsworthy Events - These are reports of major crimes, arrests, disasters, or traffic accidents, which would be of interest to the media.

The supervisor at any scene or their designee may release appropriate factual information or conduct any news briefing whenever the media is present at a police scene. This individual is responsible to provide timely information to the Division Lieutenant or designee, so that a news release can be formulated or updated promptly.

All media releases must be saved to the "P" drive under the "Press Release" file. To remain consistent and to ensure that multi-users can access this information, press releases will be saved by Incident # followed by a brief description of the content. An example would be 0612345 (Fatal TC-Brookhurst-Chapman). Any updated press release information will be denoted in the following manner 0612345(1) (Fatal TC- Brookhurst-Chapman).

Detective unit supervisors are responsible to prepare follow-up information to be released, through the primary PIO or Division Lieutenant. This will pertain to matters under investigation by these investigative units. Except as otherwise provided in this policy, no other member of the department shall release any information

pertaining to cases which are under investigation by any investigative unit of the department, without prior authorization. A designated department member may reiterate disseminated news releases by the department.

Any information necessary to obtain public assistance in the apprehension of a criminal suspect.

Any information warning the public of danger or of the nature and frequency of crime in the community.

Any information, which might result in public assistance of any investigation.

324.10 SUGGESTED CHANGES IN PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

Whenever any department member is approached by a news media representative who makes a suggestion for significant change in departmental policy and procedure concerning media liaison, the employee shall document the suggestion and forward it via the chain of command to the primary spokesperson. The suggested modification shall be evaluated and if appropriate, implemented. The primary spokesperson or their designee shall then notify the Media representative/s of the change or action taken.

324.11 CONDUCT OF MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

Any department member having a complaint regarding the conduct of any news media representative should write a memorandum to the primary spokesperson, who will receive and record the complaint and then make such investigation as may be deemed appropriate. The primary spokesperson will then forward the results of the investigation to the Chief of Police, via chain of command, with a recommendation for appropriate department action. A second substantiated complaint against the same representative MAY be brought to the attention of appropriate management personnel of the news media organization. However, if the first

Garden Grove Police Department

Policy Manual

Media Relations

substantiated complaint had such significant impact on the department or community, the Chief may elect not to wait for a second incident to contact management personnel of that news media organization.