

JUNEAU POLICE DEPARTMENT  
PROCEDURES

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<b>Title:</b>	<b>Police Media Relations</b>	<b>Chapter: 5.000</b>
<b>Date Issued:</b>	<b>April 18, 2007</b>	
<b>Revised:</b>	<b>February 15, 2023</b>	
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**I. PURPOSE**

The Juneau Police Department must have the support of the community to be successful. Establishing and maintaining an effective relationship with the news media is crucial in accomplishing this goal. The media relations policy establishes guidelines regarding media relations and the release of information to the public through the news media.

**II. POLICY**

No employee shall release any information that would jeopardize an active investigation, intentionally prejudice an accused person's right to a fair trial, or violate the law. It shall be the policy of the Department to cooperate with the news media and to maintain an atmosphere of open communication. A positive working relationship with the media is mutually beneficial. To this end, information shall be released to the news media in an impartial, accurate and timely fashion. The Department realizes that the day to day media contact for minor events should be handled by the shift supervisor responsible for the event. The Department has also chosen to designate and train Public Information Officers (PIOs) to assist shift supervisors in working with the media on both minor events and serve as the primary media contact for critical incidents. It shall be the responsibility of each employee to abide by this philosophy of cooperation.

### **III. PROCEDURES**

#### **A. Responsibility for Information Release**

1. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Chief of Police to release information to the public. That responsibility may be delegated as follows:
  - a. Supervisors with responsibility for a specific case or incident
  - b. Public information officer (PIO)
  - c. Other employees
2. The Chief of Police, PIO, or supervisors may direct other employees to respond to media inquiries.

#### **B. Media Inquiries**

1. The agency shall respond to all media inquiries in a timely and professional manner.
2. Media inquiries shall be directed to the supervisor with responsibility for a specific case or incident, or to the PIO as appropriate.
3. Communication center employees may verify that officers have been dispatched to an emergency event and give the following information:
  - a. General location of the incident
  - b. Hazards that should be avoided by the public
  - c. Brief description of the initial nature of the incident
4. Shift supervisors with responsibility for a specific case or incident, may issue press releases and assist the media with inquiries unless otherwise directed by their supervisor or PIO.
5. Shift supervisors may, at any time, request the assistance of a PIO for an incident.
6. A PIO, Deputy Chief of Police, or Chief of Police shall be responsible for all media inquiries regarding a critical incident.
  - a. A critical incident is defined as any incident that requires an incident commander of Lieutenant rank or above

#### **C. Interviews**

1. Employees contacted directly by the media shall notify the shift supervisor or PIO of any interview requests.

2. All conversations with members of the news media should be considered “on the record” and are subject to being quoted.

#### **D. Daily Bulletin – Release Issued on a Daily Basis**

1. Communications Center employees shall complete a brief summary of each case that will appear in the Daily Bulletin. The summary will be combined with specific CAD and RMS fields in a Crystal or Dynamic report to provide the following:
  - a. Date, time, general location, and nature of the complaint
  - b. Arrests
    - 1) Name of individual (unless a juvenile)
    - 2) Age
    - 3) Charge or warrant information
    - 4) Bail information if available
    - 5) Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) on DWI arrests if applicable
  - c. MVC including Hit and Run
    - 1) Suspect vehicle descriptors including color, make, model, and year
    - 2) Damage estimate
  - d. Operator’s age and sex
  - e. Citation information
    - 1) The name of an adult driver who is cited can be released
  - f. Vandalism
    - 1) Damaged item(s)
    - 2) Damage estimate
  - g. Theft
    - 1) Description of item
    - 2) Value
  - h. Lost/Found Property
    - 1) Description of item
    - 2) Value
2. Each narrative will indicate if alcohol or domestic violence was a factor.
3. If the patrol shift supervisor indicates that a news release will be issued on an incident, a note reading “News Release to Follow” may be used in lieu of the summary.
4. Details for confidential cases will not be released.
  - a. “JPD received a confidential report of child abuse” is an acceptable example.
5. Communication Center personnel will review the Daily Bulletin for the previous 24-hour period for accuracy and post on the JPD website for public viewing each afternoon.

## **E. News Releases**

News releases shall be written and disseminated to the media and to other interested parties on major incidents and events of community interest or concern. Staff will always need to exercise a level of discretion when deciding what warrants a news release. The events that warrant the generation of a news release may include but are not limited to the following:

1. Incidents involving fatalities in the CBJ
2. Cases involving serious injury to any person
3. Cases that warrant warning the public about dangerous people or areas
4. Cases where a warning to the public might allow people to avoid becoming a victim or where increased vigilance on the part of the public is warranted
5. Incidents involving groups of children
6. Cases where JPD officers need information or assistance from the public
7. Incidents that have caused widespread public inconvenience
8. Incidents where the supervisor can reasonably foresee that a large number of residents would want to know about the incident
9. In situations where releasing the information would help quell public alarm or address unfounded rumors in the community
10. Items of public interest, i.e drug round-ups, commendations, etc.
11. Other information requested by the news media

## **F. News Conferences**

1. News conferences shall be held only in connection with major events of concern to the community.
  - a. The Chief of Police or PIO shall facilitate news conferences.

## **G. Access to Crime Scenes and Critical Incidents**

1. Agency personnel shall be courteous to news media representatives at crime and critical incident scenes.
2. At such scenes, agency personnel shall ensure that the media respects the established perimeter.
  - a. Members of the media normally receive no more or less access to an incident scene than members of the general public.
  - b. The shift supervisor may grant closer access to news personnel and their equipment, to the degree that it does not interfere with law enforcement operations.
3. The media will not be prohibited from exercising news-gathering practices, including photography and interviews, outside the established perimeter.
4. Only the PIO or shift supervisor shall release information to the news media at crime and critical incident scenes.
5. At critical incident scenes, the PIO or shift supervisor may establish a media briefing area as close to the scene as safety and operational requirements allow.
  - a. The PIO may also establish an off-site location for media briefings.
6. At critical incident scenes, members of the agency shall work in close cooperation with the media to ensure that live broadcasts do not disclose any information that could endanger law enforcement personnel or the general public.

## **H. Access to Suspects**

1. No member of this agency shall pose any suspect or accused person in custody or make them available for media interviews.

## **I. Joint Investigations or Operations Involving Other Agencies:**

1. In a multi-jurisdictional investigation, the lead investigative agency is responsible for providing or coordinating the release of public information.
2. When JPD is the lead agency of a significant event, the PIO or designee shall share any information to be released with all involved agencies in advance of public dissemination.

## **J. Media Observers**

1. JPD allows members of the media to accompany law enforcement employees as they perform their regular duties.
  - a. The media is not allowed to accompany JPD officers in the service of search warrants or other legal writs.
2. All media observers shall comply with the *JPD Observer Program* policy.

## **K. Meetings with the Media**

1. To reaffirm this agency's commitment to positive media relations, the Chief of Police and/or the PIO shall meet with media representatives on a regular basis (at least annually) to discuss issues of mutual interest or concern.
  - a. Proposed or anticipated changes in Department policy or procedures dealing with the media shall be addressed at this time.

## **L. Media Credentials**

1. The Juneau Police Department acknowledges representatives from recognized media organizations who carry and display photographic identification issued by their employers.
  - a. Anyone else shall be considered a member of the general public.

# **IV. INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES**

## **A. Restrictions**

1. The release of information is subject to restrictions in the Alaska Code of Criminal Procedure sections 12.61.140 and 40.25.120 and other applicable local, state, and federal laws.
  - a. Members of this agency shall not release any information that would hamper the successful conclusion of an investigation or jeopardize the safety of affected people.
2. Written guidance from the State Attorney General shall be followed.
3. Generally, information regarding specific evidence items should not be released.

4. Any release for a sensitive or political case may be reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

**B. Department Employees May Release the Following Information:**

(Use greater discretion if the investigation is ongoing and involves units such as CIU or DEU)

1. Basic information about a crime or incident (type of crime, dates, and locations of incidents)
2. Basic information about victims, except as excluded by law
  - a. Names of businesses that have been victimized are releasable.
3. Description of suspects
4. Basic description of weapons and vehicles used
5. Basic description of stolen items
6. Basic description of injuries and condition of victims
7. Information about arrestees. This information may be released only if accompanied by the following disclaimer: "These charges are merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty."
  - a. Name of individual (if not adult, see Section D below)
  - b. Age
  - c. Charge
  - d. Type of crime (C felony, D misdemeanor, etc.)
  - e. Disposition of the person (cited, released, booked at Lemon Creek Correction Center, etc.)
  - f. Bail information if available
8. Information contained in arrest affidavits and other applicable crime or incident reports may be released with consideration of investigative consequences and coordination or preapproval by the Lieutenant of the case officer.
9. The name of deceased persons can be released after notification to next-of-kin. As a courtesy to family, whenever possible, wait 24 hours after NOK notification to publicly release name of deceased.

**C. Department Employees May NOT Release the Following Information**

1. Names of persons merely suspected of a crime

2. The specific residence or address, telephone number of a victim or witness of a crime.
  - a. The name of a business can be released.
3. Names, addresses, and any other information that would identify the victim of a sex offense, child abuse, or any other crime where the privacy of the victim is protected by law
4. Active criminal investigative information, active criminal intelligence information, and surveillance techniques
5. Names of informants and information provided by them
6. Supplemental or investigative reports until such time as the case is closed or the lead investigator deems it permissible
7. Grand jury testimony and proceedings
8. Active internal affairs investigations, as governed by state law
9. Names of witnesses, unless required by state law
10. Any individual mentioned with respect to having mental problems or who has tried to commit suicide and/or expressed suicidal thoughts
  - a. Contact the City Attorney's office for direction with questionable situations.
11. The identity of critically injured or deceased people prior to notification of next-of-kin
12. Home address, telephone numbers, and familial information of law enforcement personnel
13. Names of undercover personnel
14. Any other information that could jeopardize the successful conclusion of an investigation and prosecution
15. Any other information prohibited from public disclosure by law
16. Information that is speculative or will be harmful or prejudicial to any person, investigation, case, or the City
17. Gratuitous characterizations of any involved person



18. The names of juveniles, unless allowed in Section D below
19. Any information known, or which reasonably should be known to be inadmissible in future court proceedings
20. The existence or nature of any physical evidence likely to be presented at a future trial except that which has been revealed in a public document such as a complaint

#### **D. Release of Information Concerning Juveniles**

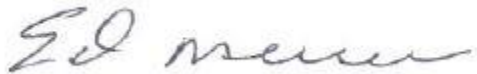
1. Information concerning juvenile defendants is not normally released unless the juvenile is prosecuted as an adult.
2. If a matter involving a juvenile is referred to the District Court for arraignment (DWI, Reckless Driving, DWLR, traffic citations, etc.) then the information concerning that offense may be released.
  - a. Releases concerning juvenile defendants shall comply with Section C above.
3. Information related to non-criminal incidents such as injuries sustained in motor vehicle crashes may be released as long as such information will not embarrass or endanger the person(s) involved and the release complies with the Victim Rights Act of 1991.
  - a. JPD's policy is not to release the names of juveniles.
4. When questions arise as to the legality or advisability of releasing the names of a juvenile, contact the City Attorney's Office for direction.

#### **E. Information Not to be Released Until Trial or Conviction**

1. Information concerning sentence or possible sentence
2. Opinions as to the character, credibility, expected testimony, or reputation of a suspect, witness, or other involved person; or the existence of a prior criminal record
3. Opinions as to the guilt or innocence of a defendant
4. Information concerning examinations, or the results of examinations, which the defendant or suspect may have taken or refused

5. The existence, contents, or absence of a confession, admission, or statement by an accused person or suspect, or that person's refusal or failure to make such statements
6. A defendant's reenactment of a crime or the fact that he may have shown investigators where a weapon or other evidence was located

Ed Mercer

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Ed Mercer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Chief of Police

