

***P.O. 1503 Media Relations***

Effective From:	7-15-2012	Effective To:	Current
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**C. *P.O. 1503 – Media Relations***

**1. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- i) The Department recognizes the right of the public to be fully and accurately informed on matters of public safety. Therefore, authorized Department personnel, as designated previously, will provide complete and accurate information in compliance with public information guidelines and within legal and investigatory limitations to all media representatives. News releases will be issued timely through the Public Affairs Section in the name of the Department and from the Superintendent when appropriate.
- ii) When the Department is assisting another agency, authorized personnel may confirm that assistance is being provided. All requests for information should be directed to the lead agency unless other arrangements are made between the agencies involved.
- iii) No statements shall be made regarding operations or incidents in which the Department is not involved.
- iv) Department personnel authorized to release information shall advise the Public Affairs Section when providing information to the media except routine traffic crash information.

**2. MEDIA ACCESS**

- i) When media representatives are present on the scene of a vehicle crash, officers should position them in an area that will not impede the normal flow of traffic, interfere with police operations or create a hazard to passing motorists.
- ii) When media representatives are present on the scene of a crime, hazardous materials incident or natural disaster, officers may allow the representatives beyond police lines into the restricted area provided they are:
  - a) Authorized by the Incident Commander.
  - b) Accompanied by a PIO or other designated spokesperson for the incident.
  - c) Identified by authentic media credentials.
  - d) Not interfering with police operations.
  - e) Not jeopardizing the safety of others at the scene.
- iii) Although media representatives may be admitted into restricted areas, they shall not be admitted into a crime scene or other area that has been secured to preserve evidence.

**3. NOTIFICATIONS**

- i) Whenever a commissioned officer of the State Police participates in an investigation, raid or other activity that may be of interest to the news media, an electronic message will be forwarded to the Public Affairs Section as soon as practical after the occurrence.
- ii) The shift supervisor shall ensure that the local public information officer is notified of events and incidents occurring in the region if they are likely to generate media interest.

**4. RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

- i) Information subject to prior restraint and not subject to media release is that information which:
  - a) Would violate the rights of an accused person.
  - b) Would interfere with an ongoing investigation.
  - c) Is legally privileged.
  - d) Has not been verified as accurate or factual.
- ii) Specific information that shall not be released to the media without authorization of the Superintendent or appropriate Deputy Superintendent includes:
  - a) The identity of a victim of a sex crime or related information which could lead to the

- victim's identity.
  - b) The identity of a victim or witness if such disclosure would place the victim or witness in personal danger.
  - c) The identity of a juvenile who is a suspect or defendant in a case subject to the jurisdiction of a juvenile court, unless the juvenile is wanted for a violent offense and presents a danger to the safety of the public by remaining at large.
  - d) The identity of a crime victim under 17 years of age at the time of the offense.
  - e) The identity of a critically injured or deceased person prior to notification of next-of-kin.
  - f) The results of an investigative procedure. The fact that such a procedure was conducted may be revealed without further comment.
  - g) The home address or telephone number of a member of the Department without that member's permission.
- iii) Interviews
- a) Requests for interviews with personnel assigned to Headquarters should be directed to the Commander of Public Affairs for coordination. In his absence, the Superintendent shall designate to whom such requests shall be directed.
  - b) Troop/Section Commanders and/or their designated spokesperson(s) may consent to interviews as necessary, but Commanders and spokespersons must exercise sound judgment and discretion in commenting on any Department policy matters. Those issues which are of a sensitive nature or are statewide or Department-wide in scope shall be suitable for public comment only after consultation with the Superintendent or the Commander of Public Affairs for coordination of responses.
  - c) The Superintendent may reserve the exclusive right to comment on any State Police matter or he may delegate that right to an authorized spokesperson.
  - d) A member of the Department is not authorized to represent the Department or to appear in a Department uniform or to display Department vehicles and equipment or display any insignia that appears to represent the Department in non-Departmental television, film productions print media, or any other form of media, without obtaining permission from the Commander of Public Affairs. Nothing contained herein shall prohibit a commissioned officer from releasing factual information at the scene of an emergency or incident until such time as a spokesperson is designated. Moreover, officers are not precluded from commenting on routine crash investigations or broad safety issues of general interest to the public.
- iv) Special Conditions
- a) Inquiries from the national news corps (networks) or national publications shall be directed to the Commander of Public Affairs for coordination.
  - b) State wire service offices (Associated Press, United Press International) shall not be contacted by field officers without first coordinating the information to be released through the Public Affairs Section. Officers at the region level are prohibited from responding to inquiries from the wire services.
  - v) The Commander of Public Affairs, or his designee, shall be responsible for the management and dissemination of information to the media when an officer's use of a firearm falls within the purview of this order. The Troop/Section Commander of the involved officer may issue a statement through the Public Affairs Section to the media concerning the basic facts of an incident that falls within the purview of this order.
- vi) No statement of guilt or wrongdoing of individuals involved shall be given.