



Chapter: Records, Freedom of Information, and Transparency
Subject: 14-10 – News Media General Policy
Effective: August 30, 2024
Supersedes: Official Order 14-10, dated April 19, 2022, and Official Order 14-11, dated April 19, 2022
Distribution: Department Members

PURPOSE: This Order establishes guidelines and procedures for interaction between department members and the media, with the goal of promoting transparency, accountability, and public trust.

14-10-1 POLICY

It is the department's policy to be transparent and accountable to the public by providing accurate and timely information to the media regarding incidents, investigations, and other matters of public interest, while respecting legal constraints and the integrity of ongoing investigations.

14-10-2 DEFINITION

- A. Media: Professional journalists, reporters, photographers, videographers, editors, and other individuals or organizations engaged in the production and distribution of news and information to the public.

14-10-3 RELEASE OF GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Members are encouraged to proactively offer information to the news media rather than wait for inquiries. They may release information to print, broadcast or online news media, verbally or in written form, on authority of their commander, or in compliance with the policy established by their commander.
- B. Worksites shall provide prompt release of newsworthy items unless circumstances make release of information inadvisable. Commanders shall delegate appropriate authority to promptly release information to the news media in their absence.
- C. Worksite commanders shall make reasonable efforts to establish a rapport with local media to promote a highly visible, positive image of the department and to resolve any local problems between the media and the department.
- D. News releases should call attention to newly assigned worksite members, special accomplishments, awards, training, major arrests and seizures, extraordinary service offered by members or members of the public, local crime trends, suggested crime prevention and traffic safety methods, and other behavior which may be of interest to members of the public and enhance public safety.

- (1) News releases shall be generated in accordance with Procedure Manual 14-01 – News Releases and Official Statements.
- F. In the event of a Governor’s-declared State of Emergency/Disaster or activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC), all release of information to the news media pertaining to department actions or response shall be coordinated through the Communications and Outreach Division.
- G. The Operations Section is the after-hours point of contact for media inquiries to Headquarters. The after-hours point of contact for media inquiries at worksites outside of Headquarters is the nearest post or regional dispatch center.
- H. Members shall work cooperatively with other law enforcement agencies, local prosecutors, the Attorney General’s Office, or other state agencies in the issuance of joint news releases on incidents that involve multiple agencies.
 - (1) Where appropriate, and with the permission of the involved agency, department news releases should include mention of other agencies involved in an incident/event, and/or quotes from a representative of the agency.
- I. Members shall familiarize themselves with the resources available on the Communications and Outreach Division Intranet site, which includes news release templates, EX-201, official statement templates, EX-202, media tips and training, information on media law, and event planning materials.

14-10-4 GUIDELINES FOR RELEASE OF INCIDENT INFORMATION

- A. Members may release the gender, age, and city of crime and crash victims to allow for news coverage of these incidents. To protect the privacy rights of individuals, the victim’s name shall be withheld. The courts have held that involvement in an automobile crash or a crime is an intimate detail of a person’s private life and disclosure of their name would not contribute significantly to the public’s understanding of the operations or activities of the government and, therefore, would be a clearly unwarranted invasion of privacy.
 - (1) There may be unique situations in which the release of a victim name is warranted and necessary for public safety or public interest reasons, and these limited situations require the approval of the Communications and Outreach Division.
 - (2) Except as otherwise provided in this Order, should a member of the media utilize outside sources to obtain a victim’s name and wishes to seek confirmation of the name from the department, members may confirm the name, provided that next of kin notifications have been made.
- B. Other factual details essential to the incident may be released, provided it will not jeopardize an investigation or prosecution. Members shall work in cooperation with the local prosecuting attorney or the Attorney General’s Office regarding the release of information to the media concerning incidents under investigation.
 - (1) Information shall be withheld if:
 - a. A court order prevents its release.
 - b. The involved prosecutor has requested the information be withheld.
 - c. The information could jeopardize the investigation or prosecution of a case.

- d. The information would disclose the identity of confidential informants or adversely affect the privacy or security of other involved persons, including law enforcement officials and their families.
 - e. The department is not the originating/lead agency on an incident or investigation.
- (2) In sexual assault and sexual abuse cases, the identity of the victim shall be kept confidential.
 - (3) In child abuse or similar cases where a juvenile has been victimized, the identity of the victim shall be kept confidential.
 - a. The Children's Protection Law prohibits the release of information about a CPS investigation. As a result, the existence of a CPS investigation or the nature of the investigation (e.g., sexual abuse) can be neither confirmed nor denied.
 - (4) Care shall be exercised in releasing details of a criminal incident or method of operation used in the perpetration of a crime. Report only those facts that are known.
 - (5) There shall be no speculation or supposition as to how a crime was committed, who may have committed the crime, or why it may have been committed.
 - (6) A description of weapons or specific details of a crime shall not be released. In a homicide case, it is sufficient to report just the victim's manner of death (shot, stabbed, etc.)
 - a. Keep in mind that withholding certain specific details of a crime is beneficial to later investigation and interrogation.
 - b. Items of evidence discovered shall not be mentioned or commented on.
 - (7) A witness who is located shall not be identified to the news media.
 - (8) Members shall not stage posed crime scenes for media photographs.
 - a. Interviews and photographs showing large seizures are permitted in the vicinity of the crime scene, at the worksite, or other suitable location.
- C. News releases should inform the public to contact a particular post instead of an individual officer if they have information concerning the crime in question. Members receiving such information shall forward it immediately to the officer in charge of the investigation.

14-10-5 MEDIA ACCESS AT INCIDENT SCENES

- A. To the extent possible, without hampering department operations or investigations, members of the media shall be provided access to information and to locations from which they may take photographs, recordings, or gather information.
 - (1) Members shall not restrict the media from accessing any area where the general public is permitted access.
 - (2) In situations where access to a location is restricted to all non-law enforcement due to safety or security concerns, the media may be prohibited from entering the area until such time as access is deemed safe and appropriate.
 - (3) Members may restrict or deny media physical access to certain areas or operations if allowing access would pose a risk to the safety of individuals involved, compromise the integrity of ongoing investigations, or impede department operations.

- (4) Media access to an incident scene on private property requires the permission of the owner or occupant of the property. Members cannot give permission for the media to enter private property. This includes media representatives who are present in a ride-along capacity.
- B. Members shall not restrict the media from photographing individuals or scenes, even in instances where the department would not release to the media photographs of such persons or scenes.
 - (1) Members shall make a positive effort to cooperate with the media. Members are not to take any action to assist or discourage news media in photographing an accused person in custody.
 - (2) Persons placed under arrest are not to be posed for media photographers, but the media should not be prevented from photographing individuals under arrest as long as the member of the media is on public property, or on private property where the owners do not object.
- C. Members may contact a Public Information Officer (PIO) for assistance when handling requests from members of the media.
- D. PIOs shall respond to critical incident scenes to coordinate media responses when appropriate.

DIRECTOR

Annual Review Responsibility: Communications and Outreach Division

Accreditation Standards: CALEA 54.1.1 A-C, F and 54.1.3