

# MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

<b>SUBJECT: NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS AND NEWS RELEASES</b>	General Order: 321
Effective Date: June 15, 2001 Revision Date: November 4, 2022	Distribution: All Employees

## **I. PURPOSE**

This general order establishes procedures for the release of police department information to the news media and access of the media to incident scenes.

## **II. POLICY**

The prevention of crime and the effective performance of all other aspects of the Meridian Township Police Department's mission require a cooperative effort with the community. The Police Department is responsible to the public. To meet that objective, the public reasonably needs to be informed about police activities and operations. The Department has an obligation to provide information with openness and candor.

News media, both print and electronic, serves as an important conduit of information to the public. A relationship of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect between the police and news media is essential to realize our common goals of serving and informing the public. Therefore, it is the policy of the Meridian Township Police Department to make information regarding incidents and activities generally available to representatives of the news media. Information shall not be distributed if such information is legally privileged, would violate the constitutional rights of any person, or would otherwise impair a law enforcement activity or violate any other general order or directive.

Further, it is the policy of the Meridian Township Police Department to, when possible, involve the media in the development of and changes in policies and procedures relating to the news media.

## **III. PROCEDURES**

### **A. Responsibilities**

1. All employees of the department will extend courtesy and cooperation to the news media, however, successful accomplishment of the police mission still takes precedence.
2. The Chief will appoint the position of Public Information Officer (PIO).
3. The duties of the PIO include:
  - a. Assist news personnel in covering news stories that may be of interest to the media

- b. Assist news personnel at the scene of incidents
  - c. Assist the news media on an on-call basis
  - d. Prepare and distribute news releases
  - e. Arrange and assist at news conferences
  - f. Coordinate and authorize the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects
  - g. Assist in crisis situations within the agency
  - h. Coordinate the release of authorized information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations
  - i. Coordinate the release of information deemed important to the promotion of the Department (in conjunction with the Records Division Supervisor)
  - j. Promote communication and dissemination of information of importance to employees of the department
  - k. Coordinate the dissemination of crime prevention information
  - l. Assign the most appropriate employee the task of releasing information
4. The Chief, the PIO, or a designee will normally authorize news releases.
  5. The agency having primary jurisdiction over an incident or investigation will be responsible for coordination and release of information.
  6. Patrol supervisors may release traffic accident information to facilitate timely release of information within established parameters.
  7. Requests by media personnel for statistical information, reports, or any interview with employees regarding any aspect of police operations shall be referred to the Chief or PIO.
  8. General orders and other directives shall not be released without the chief's specific approval. The exception is the domestic violence operating procedure.
  9. Requests for department records by media representatives shall be referred to the records division.

10. If for any reason a member of the media is prohibited access to information from the department, the Chief or designee shall notify the employing news agency of the actions and reasons.
11. The Chief of Police shall be notified of any interviews with any media source if the employee believes the interview may be published in any fashion.

B. Access to Incident Scenes

1. The public will be denied access beyond the outer perimeter of any incident scene for purposes of safety and integrity of evidence collection. Media representatives will be given access only up to the incident perimeter unless given specific permission by the Chief of Police or supervisor in charge.
2. Media representatives may be permitted to take pictures in or from any area to which they have access.
3. Officers shall not compel prisoners to be photographed or interviewed for news purposes.
4. Permitted media access to an incident scene on private property will require the permission of the owner or occupant of the property. The police department cannot give permission for the media to enter private property. This includes media representatives who are present in a ride-along capacity.
5. Media representatives may be allowed to park their vehicles near the scene of incidents, so long as parking does not impede the flow of traffic, pose danger to others, or interfere with operational needs. Officers will assist news media by directing them to the nearest suitable parking area.
6. Individuals may, at times, request no publicity about personal involvement in an incident. Unless such information is barred from release, the decision rests with the media. Individuals should be advised, except as exempted, that police incidents are of public concern and are subject to media reporting.

C. Release of Information

1. The Department will release information as promptly as circumstances permit in an impartial, objective way. However, information will not be released prematurely or withheld for the benefit of a specific media agency or representative; however, specific queries of an exclusive nature will be respected.

2. Information released to the media shall be factual and not include opinions or subjective observations.
3. When releasing traffic crash information:
  - a. Only release
    - i. The location of the collision
    - ii. Date
    - iii. Time
    - iv. Number of vehicles involved
    - v. Number of people injured
    - vi. Seat belt use
  - b. Do not release
    - i. Names of drivers or occupants
    - ii. Address of parties
    - iii. Telephone numbers
    - iv. Medical information (including extent of injuries)
    - v. Whether alcohol was a factor
    - vi. Opinions regarding facts about the accident
4. Information which shall not be released to the media includes (exceptions granted by the Chief):
  - a. Names, addresses, and exact location of victims of sex offenses
  - b. Names of victims of fatal or serious injury until the next of kin has been notified
  - c. Names of juveniles involved until parents have been notified
  - d. Identity of suspects who have been arrested but not arraigned
  - e. Identity of victims or witnesses where such information could subject them to danger or violation of their constitutional rights
  - f. Exact identifying information about the weapons or other physical evidence
  - g. Police operational methods, tactics, and procedures which would be compromised by public release
  - h. The exact amount of monetary loss in a theft or robbery
  - i. Comments on the character or reputation of any individual

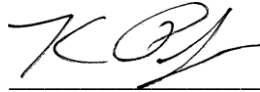
- j. Information obtained from the Law Enforcement Information Network (LEIN)
  - k. Information about the content of a confession, admission, or statements by the accused
  - l. Results of any examination or test
  - m. Re-enactment of the crime
  - n. Information which would aid the escape of a wanted person or compromise an ongoing investigation
  - o. Information which would be prejudicial to an individual's right to a fair trial
  - p. Home address or telephone of any employee of the department
  - q. Information that would constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy of another person
  - r. Information that would reveal the identity of an individual who furnishes information of a confidential nature
  - s. Information that would predictably endanger the life or physical safety of any person
5. Initial news releases should be printed on department letterhead and contain:
- a. Date of release
  - b. Name of authorizing command or supervisory officer
  - c. A heading describing the type of incident
  - d. Date and time of incident
  - e. Location of incident
  - f. Summary of the nature of incident – who, what, when, where, why
  - g. Description of suspect(s)
  - h. Contact person

- i. A statement, if appropriate, requesting persons with additional information regarding this incident to contact the Meridian Township Police Department at (517) 853-4800 or Crime Stoppers (517) 483-STOP.
  - j. See Appendix A for layout
6. Press releases may be issued by either the PIO, the Administrative Assistant, or anyone else designated by the Chief of Police or his/her designee. The press release may be released via fax, email, Everbridge, or social media or any other medium the Chief of Police or his/her designee deems appropriate.
7. The Administrative Assistant will keep a current copy of contact information for news agencies for press releases.

**IV. CANCELLATIONS**

**None**

Authorized by:



Ken Plaga, Chief of Police

Index as:

PIO  
Press Release  
Information Release  
Public Information Officer  
Media  
News Release  
Standard 1.7.1

- Appendix A -  
Typed on Township letterhead



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**Month day, year**

**CONTACT:** Name, Title cambria black size 11  
517.853.4380 | *email black cambria italicized size 11 linked*

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**Meridian Township Header Cambria Size 11 Bold**  
*Meridian Township Sub Header Cambria size 11 black italicized*

**MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP, MI** — Meridian Township lead sentence to catch reporters attention to print the story and conduct an interview. The body of the text is Cambria black size 11 (approximately 10 – 15 words).

###

(Only one space in between body of text for press release and numeric symbols)  
(Use three of numeric symbols with 2 line spaces from the body of the text, centered)