

Chapter: 54	Public Information
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54.1 Public Information

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54.1.1 Public information function

- A. Assisting Media Personnel at Scenes** - The Department will strive to maintain a relationship of mutual trust and cooperation with the news media. New Bern Police personnel shall respect the news media's responsibility to gather and disseminate factual information unless those efforts will infringe upon the constitutional rights of the accused, impede an active departmental investigation, or are otherwise in contradiction with North Carolina public records law.

The department designated Public Information Officer (PIO) will coordinate the release of information to media representatives at incident scenes by establishing media staging areas and conducting timely briefings.

- B. Preparing and Distributing Media Releases** - Written press releases may be prepared by the PIO, Incident Commander, Division Captains, District/Section Lieutenants, or their designees. All press releases will be signed by the Chief of Police or designee. All written press releases shall be prepared for the signature of the Chief of Police or designee.

In most circumstances, the release of information to the media should be performed by the Chief of Police, PIO, Incident Commander, Division Captains, or Section Lieutenants.

Other employees shall not be prohibited from communicating with the media on issues in which they are personally involved or about which they have factual information. Employees shall be held accountable for the content and accuracy of the information released.

- C. Arranging and Assisting in Media Conferences** – When necessary, the PIO will arrange interviews and media conferences between other department personnel and the news media.

D. Coordinating and Authorizing the Release of Information about Victims, Witnesses and Suspects

The PIO should be familiar with the public records disclosure laws and will not disclose confidential information concerning victims, witness and suspects of a crime. The PIO will coordinate the release of any information with the victims, witnesses and suspects when appropriate.

E. Coordinating and Authorizing the Release of Information Concerning Confidential Investigations

All reasonable efforts shall be made to provide the information requested by members of the news media. However, the release of information shall be in strict accordance with the provisions of this order and the

North Carolina Public Records Law, Chapter 132 North Carolina General Statutes. In the event that all or part of the requested information is exempt from disclosure, the reasons for denial of information access shall be courteously explained to the requesting party.

The following categories of information shall not be released except upon the authorization of the Chief of Police or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction:

1. Records of criminal intelligence information - Records of criminal intelligence information means records or information that pertain to a person or group of persons that is compiled by a public law enforcement agency in an effort to anticipate, prevent, or monitor possible violations of the law.
2. Active records of criminal investigations - Records of criminal investigations means all records or any information that pertains to a person or group of persons that is compiled by a public law enforcement agency for the purpose of attempting to prevent or solve violations of the law, including information derived from witnesses, laboratory tests, surveillance, investigators, confidential informants, photographs, and measurements. Records of criminal investigations shall be considered "active" as long as it is related to an ongoing investigation which is continuing with a reasonable, good faith anticipation of securing an arrest or prosecution in the foreseeable future. In addition, criminal investigative information shall be considered "active" while such information is directly related to pending prosecutions or appeals.
3. Any information revealing the identity of a confidential informant or a confidential source.
4. Any information revealing surveillance techniques, procedures, or personnel.
5. Any information revealing undercover personnel.
6. Any information to include the photograph, name, address, or other fact or information which reveals the identity of any victim of a sexual crime or child abuse.
7. The identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to notification of next of kin.
8. Any information which reveals the personal assets of the victim of a crime other than the property actually stolen or destroyed. This category would include any property or valuables overlooked by the perpetrator of a crime.
9. Any information which may jeopardize the constitutional guarantees of a fair and impartial trial to include prior criminal records, any opinions concerning the character, reputation, credibility, guilt or innocence of any victim, witness, defendant, or suspect, or any information concerning a possible or potential court disposition of any case.
10. Information regarding the existence or details of any internal affairs investigation.
11. Home addresses or telephone numbers of police department employees.
12. Any non-redacted information to include voice recordings and call for service detail information.

F. Procedures for Release of Information in Joint Operations – In cases where other agencies are involved in the investigation along with New Bern Police Department Personnel, the PIO will coordinate the release of information with the other agencies involved when practical.

The agency head or highest-ranking officer available at any cooperating agency shall be notified prior to the release of any information or statements to the media regarding an investigation or action covered by a request for mutual aid.

G. Guidelines for the use of social media - The Public Information Officer or their designee will post news worthy events, community events, and all press releases by the agencies (CEO), on the department social media sites. The press release will also be sent out via the department's media e-mail group.

54.1.2 Changes in policies and procedures - The public information policies and procedures of the New Bern Police Department and any revisions to those policies shall be disseminated to the local news agencies for their information and input.

54.1.3 Media access during enforcement operations - Access to crime and major incident scenes must be restricted to those persons actively involved in the investigation in order to prevent the destruction of evidence or interference with the investigation. However, news media personnel shall be afforded reasonable access as soon as possible. Media personnel allowed into an active crime or incident scene shall be escorted by a police officer and may be required to leave the scene if continued access will hinder the investigation.

54.1.4 Public Information Officer Training - Public Information Officer (PIO): Upon appointment and or selection to this position, the PIO or their designee will attend a training course in reference to Media Relations. The training needs to be completed within one year of appointment.