NC State University Police Department

Policy and Procedure

311 – News Release and Media Cooperation

Approved: February 3, 2026

Replaces Policy 311 Dated:03/11/2025

*All revisions are in **BOLD** print.*

PURPOSE: The purpose of this procedure is to establish guidelines which will assist North Carolina State University Police Department personnel in making news releases and in providing cooperation and assistance to news media regarding cases and/or incidents over which the North Carolina State University Police Department has primary responsibility and jurisdiction.

POLICY: It is the policy of the North Carolina State University Police Department to cooperate fully and impartially with accredited representatives of the news media in their efforts to gather and disseminate factual information, where consistent with established procedures, and where such activities do not subvert the ends of justice or infringe upon individual rights of privacy or upon individual rights to a fair and impartial trial.

DEFINITIONS:

Supervisor in Charge: Any supervisor with the rank of Sergeant or above, any Corporal in the absence of the Sergeant or any criminal investigator on scene.

Public Information Officer (PIO): An employee of the police department or University designated by the Chief of Police to serve as the liaison with the news media for the purpose of coordinating press conferences and providing information to news media regarding police incidents occurring within the University. For this policy, the Department maintains an internal PIO to help vet information and documents before release, and an external, primary, PIO who will disseminate such information to media outlets and the public.

PROCEDURES:

A. Direct Release of Information to News Media

1. University Communications (UComm) is appointed by the Chief of Police as the primary Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Police Department. All media queries shall be forwarded to the designated Public Information Officer from University Communications.
2. UComm, the department's primary PIO, and the University Police Department internal PIO work collaboratively and are the designated entities authorized to release information to the news media and the public about criminal cases or the status of investigations.
3. The supervisor in charge of the incident, Staff Duty Officer or Division Major, may disseminate information (as outlined in Section B of this General Order) directly to the media if an exigency in disseminating that information exists or the designated Public Information Officer from University Communications is not available.
4. In administrative matters or crisis situations information within the agency may be obtained from the Chief of Police or their designee.
5. Employees of the department must exercise care, common sense and discretion to avoid rendering statements or information which, if later quoted, may create a misunderstanding or compromise the effectiveness of the operations of the Police Department.
6. No preferential treatment will be given to any individual representative of the news media. This statement will not be construed to prohibit initiative reporting, nor does it require notifying all news media prior to the release of information.

7. To ensure that confirmed, official accounts of events are reported, the supervisor in charge of the scene, or their designee, will contact the Staff Duty Officer at the earliest possible moment with an oral summary of the incident. The Staff Duty Officer will forward the information to the designated PIO from University Communications.

    a. Information to be included will generally cover the following: who, what, where, when and how of an event and any other supporting data not restricted herein.

    b. The supervisor in charge may answer general inquiries made by any news media representative who responds to the scene of an event; however, inquiries for investigative information will be referred to the PIO.

8. Names of victims (hospitalized or deceased) will not be released to the media until after next-of-kin have been notified.

B. News Release Guidelines in Criminal Cases

1. UComm and the Department's internal PIO are the designated entities that are authorized to release information to the news media and the public about criminal cases or the status of investigations.

2. The following information should be made available to news media in criminal matters:

    a. The accused name as provided by law if 18 years of age or over, sex, residence, employment, marital status and any similar biographical information.

    b. The substance or text of the charge (if one is made), complaint or indictment information.

    c. The identity of the investigating and arresting agency and length of the investigation.

    d. The circumstances immediately surrounding the arrest, including the time and place of arrest, resistance, pursuit, possession and use of weapons, and a description of items seized at the time of arrest.

    e. The name of any victim, address, age, sex, occupation, next of kin and property taken, subject to all conditions listed hereafter.

    f. The type of force used against the victim and extent of injuries to either victim or assailant.

    g. The age and sex of a victim, and general location only, where rape or sex offenses are involved.

3. The following information should not be released to the news media in criminal matters:

    a. Statements related to the character or reputation of an accused person or a prospective witness.

    b. Admissions, confessions or the contents of a statement or alibi attributable to an accused person.

    c. The performance on the results of any tests, or the refusal of the accused to take a test or to participate in a lineup, except that which is a matter of public record.

    d. Statements concerning the credibility or anticipated testimony of prospective witness.

    e. The possibility of a plea of guilty to the offense charged or to a lesser offense or any other disposition.

    f. Opinions concerning evidence or any argument in the case whether it is anticipated that the evidence or argument will be used at trial.

    g. Name, address and the present location of any victims of sex offenses.

    h. Name and address of witnesses of the following crimes: homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary auto theft and larceny.

i. Name and address of any subject sought for a crime, but not yet formally charged, unless help is wanted from the news media in an effort to locate the subject.

j. Name and address of juvenile victims, or juveniles arrested as provided by law. (Note: As of December 1, 2019, juveniles are now defined in the North Carolina law as individuals under the age of 18)

k. The contents of any suicide note.

C. Special Considerations

1. At Crime or Incident Scenes

a. General Access

1) North Carolina State University Police Department employees will extend every courtesy to accredited news media representatives (reporters and photographers) who are actively covering an incident at the scene. These courtesies will permit closer access, generally providing an opportunity to view the scene and will provide for vehicles and equipment to be located closer, so long as such courtesy does not interfere with either the mission or with general traffic flow.

2) Also, where there is danger of personal injury, access will be restricted until the supervisor in charge determines the area is safe.

b. Direct Access at Crime Scenes

1) Direct access by media personnel will be allowed only after all known evidence has been processed and the on-site investigation has been completed. This restriction is necessary to preserve the integrity of the scene.

2) Once such integrity is ensured, media mobility will not be restricted except that permission must be obtained from owners or their representative when photographs, films or video tape are to be taken on private property.

c. Hostage or Barricade Situation

1) In hostage or barricade situations, or any critical incident, the supervisor in charge will designate a preliminary press area immediately upon arrival at the scene and establish it closer to the scene when it is safe to do so.

D. Photographing, Televising, Recording by News Media

1. In Public Places

a. News media representatives will be allowed to freely photograph, film or video tape at the scene of any incident so long as their activity does not significantly interfere with an investigation.

b. Officers may take protective measures, such as humanely covering a body, to prevent photographing or televising, if such actions are deemed necessary by the supervisor in charge.

2. Of Suspects, Accused Persons

a. Suspects or persons in custody will not be deliberately posed for photographs, telecasts, or interviews. Neither will department Employees pose themselves with a suspect or accused, nor enter into any agreement to have a suspect or person in custody at a prearranged time and place to be photographed, televised, or interviewed. No action will be directed against the news media to prevent or impede their lawful right to photograph such persons at incident scenes or in other public places.

b. b. Mug shots may be made available to the news media, with the permission of the investigating officer, or at the direction of a Staff Duty Officer, Field Operation Major, Administrative Division Major, or Chief of Police. Normally photographs of suspects will not be released when their publication may jeopardize an in-court identification.

3. At Fire Scenes

a. Media access to, and movement within fire lines on campus is controlled by the fire department supervisor in charge.

b. When news media arrive at such events, the ranking officer on the scene will confer with the fire official in charge and assist in establishing an observation point from which media may observe and/or photograph proceedings.

4. Interviewing Persons in Custody

a. News media representatives will not be permitted to interview persons in custody.

5. Confidential, Internal Investigations

a. Confidential Operations

Confidential intelligence or investigative information will not be disclosed unless authorized by the Chief of Police or their designee.

Internal Investigations

1) Sensitive or investigative information (particularly the identity of officers involved) from the Internal Affairs investigations will not be disclosed unless authorized by the Chief of Police or their designee.

2) When information is released on internal investigations, it will conform to state law as it concerns the rights of the employee.

3) When details of an internal investigation are to be released to the news media, disclosure will be made only after the case has been closed.

E. Authority and Responsibility

1. Role Of Supervisor in Charge of Incident Scene

To ensure that confirmed, official accounts of events are reported, the supervisor in charge of the scene, or their designee, will contact the Staff Duty Officer at the earliest possible moment with an oral summary of the incident.

2. Responsibility of Supervisor at Incident Scene

Final responsibility for the action of the supervisor in charge, regarding media, rests with the Staff Duty Officer, Field Operations Major, Administrative Division Major or Chief of Police. This applies both to submission of an oral summary to the Chief of Police and to answering media inquiries as necessary at the scene.

F. Media Accreditation

1. The North Carolina State University Police Department does not issue press credentials.

2. The North Carolina State University Police Department recognizes valid identification from all accredited news agencies. Appropriate media privileges are extended to properly identified news media representatives due to the public purpose served by such agencies. News media privileges <u>are</u> <u>not</u> extended to unaffiliated (free-lance) writers, photographers or other employees of the general public.

G. Media Participation in Policy

The contents of this standard operating procedure will be furnished to accredited media representatives upon request. All changes to this standard will likewise be furnished upon request. Accredited news agencies are invited and encouraged to participate in the formulation of policy as it pertains to this procedure. Once a year or when revisions occur to this general order, the PIO will forward the general order to the news media and seek their input for any other recommendations or suggestions for revisions to the general order.

H. News Releases/News Conferences

1. News releases will be necessitated by specific occurrences within the department's jurisdiction. The contents of all news releases will be approved by the Chief of Police or their designee. News releases will be in bulletin form and/or in person.

2. In instances in which more than one agency is involved, the following procedures shall be followed:

   a. The commanding officer of the agency having primary jurisdiction will be responsible for releasing or coordinating the release of information.

   b. When the university police department has the primary jurisdiction, the Chief or their designee will, if necessary, draft a press release.

   c. The press release shall be forwarded to University Communications for review and dissemination to media outlets.

3. News conferences will be held at the discretion of the Chief of Police. Conferences may include prepared statements, a question-answer format, or a combination of both. Arrangements for location of the conference, notification of news media, and assistance to news agency correspondents will be made by the Chief of Police or their designee, in conjunction with the University Communications.

I. Media or Individuals making routine requests for police reports (i.e. publicly available version) will be directed to the University Police website. All other requests should be directed to the University's online public records portal.

APPROVED:

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Chief of Police