

PARKER POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE MANUAL

| | | |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2.27 | EFFECTIVE: August 3, 2012 | James Tsurapas, Chief of Police |
| | REVISED: February 15, 2021 | |
| SUBJECT: MEDIA RELATIONS/PUBLIC INFORMATION | | |
| CALEA: 54.1.1; 54.1.2; 54.1.3 | | PAGE: 1 of 5 |

2.27.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a procedure for providing information to authorized news media representatives. The Department desires to assist in their efforts to gather factual public information pertaining to Department activities so long as those efforts do not unduly interfere with those activities, violate the law or infringe on individual rights.

2.27.2 POLICY

The Department Public Information Officer (PIO) is the point of contact for all media inquiries regarding the Department. Department members should refer all media-related inquiries to the PIO. The PIO will work in conjunction with the Community Affairs Department, who also has a designated Town PIO, to provide the following:

- A. Cooperating with news media personnel covering routine news stories, news stories that may involve the Department and at incident scenes. <54.1.1 a.>
- B. Preparing and distributing Department media releases. <54.1.1 b.>
- C. Being available for on-call responses to the news media.
- D. Arranging for, and helping with, news media conferences. <54.1.1 c.>
- E. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning victims, witnesses and suspects. <54.1.1 d.>
- F. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning confidential Department investigations and operations. <54.1.1 e.>
- G. Developing procedures for releasing information when other public service agencies have involvement in a mutual effort. <54.1.1 f.>
- H. Consult with Department members of the news media in the maintenance and updating of the Department's policies as they relate to the public information function.

2.27.3 PROCEDURE

- A. Availability to Media
 - 1. The PIO will maintain an on-call status during non-business hours.

2. In the event a PIO is needed during non-business hours, the on-duty or on-call Commander or on-duty supervisor will contact the on-call Department PIO.
3. The on-call Department PIO should return the call within fifteen (15) minutes to the requesting supervisor.
4. The PIO will work with the Community Affairs Department to ensure a representative is present for any Town-related media issues, if needed.
5. The on-duty supervisor will work in conjunction with the on-call Department PIO to determine if a PIO is needed on scene.
6. If determined that the on-call Department PIO will respond, the on-call Department PIO must respond to the Department or designated location within one (1) hour in business attire or Class C uniform, pursuant to the PD Manual Appearance policy.

B. Cooperation with Media

1. Authorized news media representatives shall have reasonable access to the Department PIO, as governed by this policy. When information is denied to a media representative, the basis for that denial will be fully and courteously explained.
2. The sergeant or on-duty supervisor at any crime scene or incident may release information of a factual nature to the media as governed by this policy, however, should not feel obligated to talk with the media. If a sergeant or on-duty supervisor is unsure of the facts or the propriety of releasing information, he/she should refer the inquiry to the Department PIO or his or her immediate supervisor.
3. When a sergeant or on-duty supervisor is contacted by a media representative or has released information to the media, the Department member must advise the Department PIO as soon as is reasonably practical.
4. Written news releases will be disseminated by the Department PIO or the Community Affairs Department representative.

C. Media Relations

1. The Department media policies allow for maximum cooperation with media personnel. This ensures the media can gather information it needs, yet allows Department members to conduct their investigations efficiently. The media has no greater right to information than a private citizen.
2. The Chief of Police or authorized designee should seek the ideas and suggestions of the media and consider them when revising a current policy or formulating a new one. <54.1.2>

D. Investigative Information

1. Requests from the news media regarding ongoing investigations will be handled by the Department PIO in conjunction with Town policy and statute, an Investigations Division Commander, the District Attorney's Office and/or the town attorney's office, as applicable.

2. Authorization for the release of information regarding internal investigations will be at the discretion of the Chief of Police, authorized designee or per legislative guidelines.
3. Information that may be released includes:
 - a. nature of the event or crime;
 - b. a general description of the incident including location of occurrence, date/time, damage incurred or loss suffered;
 - c. name of the commissioned officer in charge of an investigation and the number of people involved in the investigation;
 - d. requests from the Department for assistance in locating evidence, witnesses or suspects; and
 - e. information as required by law.
4. Information that should not be released, unless otherwise required by law includes:
 - a. the identity of suspects prior to arrest unless such information would aid in capturing the suspect or serve to warn the public of potential danger;
 - b. the identity of victims/witnesses where such information could subject them to danger or extreme embarrassment;
 - c. the identity of juvenile suspects unless they are involved in a Class 1, 2, 3 or 4 felony crime;
 - d. the results of investigative procedures such as lineups, polygraph exams, fingerprint comparison or ballistics tests; and
 - e. information which may interfere with the investigation such as the nature of leads, details of the crime known only to the perpetrator or specifics of the modus operandi.
5. Public and criminal justice record requests from the media will be fulfilled as soon as practical and at least within the time frame required by the state law, and as provided by applicable Town Council resolutions.
6. It is the preference of the Department to protect the privacy of crime victims, and the Department does not routinely provide the names of victims to the media. However, victim identity may be public information and may have to be provided if officially requested. Victim's identity may be released except in cases where the person is the victim of a sex offense, a death where the coroner has not notified next of kin when the victim is a juvenile, or otherwise required by law.

E. Arrest Information

1. Following the arrest or issuance of an arrest warrant, information that may be released includes:
 - a. if an adult - name, age, race or nationality, ethnicity, address and occupation; if a juvenile - as governed by Colorado Children's Code C.R.S. §19-1-307, as amended;
 - b. the circumstances immediately surrounding the arrest including time and place, whether pursuit or use of force was involved, possession or use of a weapon, contraband seized, charges faced, bond and location of detention; and
 - c. the identity of the commissioned officers involved (unless working undercover) and the duration of the investigation; and
 - d. any other information required by law.
2. Following the arrest or issuance of an arrest warrant, information that should not be released, unless otherwise required by law includes:
 - a. name of defendant's employer;
 - b. comments about the character or reputation of the defendant;
 - c. the refusal of the accused to make a statement or the contents of statements made, including confessions;
 - d. the refusal of the accused to submit to tests or examinations and the results of any tests or examinations; and
 - e. any remarks about the assumed guilt or innocence of the defendant, or any medical information about the suspect.

F. Multi-Agency Response

In the event of multi-agency response situations, the agency having the most direct responsibility for resolution of the situation will assume the lead public information role. In the event of unclear or conflicting responsibilities, the provisions of the Town of Parker Emergency Operations Plan (public information section) will provide further guidance. In large-scale disaster situations, and in all other situations in which an Incident Command has been put into place, the assigned Incident Commander will have authority to designate the lead public information officer and to assign such staff to the public information function as may be necessary. <54.1.1 f.>

G. Special Consideration <54.1.3>

1. At crime scenes, the Department will set up an established perimeter for the media. The perimeter line shall be a reasonable distance away from the scene in order to ensure the protection of the scene while giving the media an ample opportunity to adequately report the incident.
2. Department members will extend every reasonable courtesy to authorized news media representatives at crime scenes. No Department member shall prohibit the media from news-gathering practices, including photography and interviews, outside the established perimeter. Department members and others may be photographed in public places.
3. The news media, including photographers, shall not be allowed access to private property if the owner or agent of that property requests they be excluded.
4. The news media shall not be allowed access to any area where the possibility exists that evidence may be damaged, destroyed or altered.
5. At the scenes of incidents or during crisis situations, media cooperation will be maintained to the degree that it does not interfere with the mission of the Department or other emergency response personnel. In any situation where multiple jurisdictions are present, activities of the news media will be coordinated between the PIO and persons representing such agencies.
6. Authorized news media representatives should not be prevented from having access to an area solely due to the possibility of injury or death to themselves. If that is the only consideration, the media representatives should be advised of the danger and then allowed to make the decision to enter on their own.
7. The Command staff will be responsible to ensure the appropriate information is communicated to the PIO as well as to provide assistance to the PIO in the release of appropriate information.