


Department of Public Safety
Policies and Procedures

<u>Title</u> Public Information and Records Policy	<u>SOP Number</u> 12.3.400
Approval Signature 	
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Public Information and Records Policy

- I. **Purpose:** To establish a uniform policy regarding the release of information and records to the news media and the public. This policy will clarify what information and records can be released, as well as what should be restricted.
- II. **Policy:** The University of Cincinnati Department of Public Safety (UCPS) is committed to informing the community and the news media of events that are handled by and involving UCPS when such information may impact the community.

Official public statements, comments, and/or statistical data about criminal cases or the operation of the Department shall be made by the Director of Public Safety or designee, the Chief of Police, and the Public Information Officer. Public information requests from the media shall be directed to and will be handled by the Department's Public Information Officer. No correspondence relating to any case, investigation, or official act of this Department will be provided to any person outside of the Department without authorization of the Public Safety Director or their designee.

Requests for records shall be directed to the Records Section which will work with the Office of General Counsel on the request. The Office of General Counsel will handle responses to records requests according to Ohio's Public Records Act.

III. Procedure:

- A. The Public Information Officer can be contacted at any time via a personal communication device ("PCD"). The general duties of the Public Information Officer include:
 1. Handling requests from media outlets regarding routine news stories and at the scenes of incidents.
 2. Preparing and distributing UCPS news releases.
 3. Coordinating news conferences.
 4. Coordinating the appropriate release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects when necessary.
 5. Coordinating the appropriate release of information concerning UCPS investigations and operations when necessary.
 6. Coordinating with other agencies involved in critical incidents, as directed by the Director of Public Safety.
 7. Assisting in crises within UCPS.
 8. Releasing other information deemed appropriate by the Director of Public Safety, the Chief of Police, the Director of Business Continuity & Emergency Management, or their designees.
- B. Scene of an Incident or Fast Breaking Event:
 1. The senior on-duty supervisor (or patrol officer if a supervisor is not available) shall share all necessary information with the Department's Public Information Officer when at the scene of an incident or other fast-breaking event.
 2. Once briefed, the Department's Public Information Officer may identify a spokesperson for a specific incident and provide specific information to be

Public Information and Records Policy

released.

C. Request for Records:

1. All requests for records, regardless of the identity of the requester or form of the record (e.g. electronic, photograph, video, audio, paper, etc.), should be immediately forwarded to the Records Section, and the Records Section will log all requests.
2. The Records Section will notify the Department's Public Information Officer of any records requests from the news media.
3. The Records Section will then immediately forward all records requests to the Office of General Counsel via email at public.records@uc.edu. The Office of General Counsel will handle acknowledgments and any additional correspondences necessary to clarify the request.
4. The Records Section will gather responsive records and forward the records to the Office of General Counsel for review and response according to Ohio's Public Records Act.
5. Redactions should be made in compliance with [applicable laws](#) and consultation with the Office of General Counsel.

D. Request for Information Regarding Arrests and Ongoing Investigations:

1. All requests from the news media shall be logged by the Records Section and directed to the Department's Public Information Officer for handling.
2. The identity of an uncharged suspect is to be considered confidential and the identity will not be divulged unless approved by the Director of Public Safety and/or Chief of Police. The only exception to this will be in cases where the disclosure of such information would facilitate the apprehension or the suspect presents a danger to society, and such information is crucial to the safety of the community.
3. No Department member, unless approved by the Director of Public Safety and/or Chief of Police, shall release or authorize the release regarding the prior criminal record of any person. Additionally, until the conclusion of a criminal trial or the closure of a case without prosecution, no Department member shall release or authorize the release of any statement for dissemination by any means of public communication concerning:
 - a. The existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement given by the accused or the refusal or failure of the accused to make any statement.
 - b. The performance or results of any examinations or tests, or the accused's refusal to submit to such examination or tests.
 - c. The identity, testimony, or credibility of prospective witnesses.
 - d. The possibility of a guilty plea to an offense.
 - e. Opinion as to the accused's guilt or innocence, or as to the merits of the case or the evidence in the case.

E. It is appropriate following an arrest, issuance of an arrest warrant, filing of a complaint, information, or indictment, for the Director of Public Safety or designee, Chief of Police, Public Information Officer:

Public Information and Records Policy

1. Release a factual statement of the accused's name, age, residence, occupation, and family status.
 2. Announce the fact of the arrest, time and place of arrest, residence, pursuit, use of weapons, and charges placed.
 3. Announce the identity of the investigating agency or agencies and the length of the investigation.
 4. In some cases, officers' safety or the safety of victims and witnesses, or the continuation of further investigation may require that the identities of those involved be withheld.
 5. Disclose the charge, including a brief description of the elements necessary in the O.R.C. that constitute the charge.
- F. Releasing photographs and video:
1. Arrested persons:
 - a. Requests for photographs and video will be directed to the Public Information Officer for consultation with the Director of Public Safety or designee, and OGC before releasing any pictures.
 2. Victims and Witnesses:
 - a. Photographs of victims or witnesses will not be released by police personnel.
 3. Public Safety Personnel
 - a. Photographs of Public Safety personnel shall not be released without the permission of the Director of Public Safety.
- G. Other Records
1. Medical records will **not** be released.
 2. LEADS/CCH/NCIC information will **not** be released.
 3. Social security numbers will **not** be released.
- H. Release of Information within the University of Cincinnati:
1. Information concerning students, faculty, or staff members injured as a result of criminal victimization shall be released to:
 - a. Director of Public Safety or designee, Chief of Police, and Public Information Officer
 - b. Student Affairs if the individual is a student.
 - c. Appropriate Dean or Department Head in the case of faculty or staff.
 2. Information concerning non-students arrested by the University of Cincinnati Police Division ("UCPD") will only be furnished to the Public Information Officer.
 3. Information concerning arrested students will be furnished to:
 - a. Student Affairs.
 - b. Public Information Officer or designee.
 4. Information concerning arrested faculty or staff will be provided to others within the University by the Director of Public Safety, as necessary.
- I. Release of Information from Department Files:
1. Every twenty-four (24) hours the Clery Compliance Coordinator or designee will produce a Daily Crime Log that will be available to the public at designated

Public Information and Records Policy

campus security posts. The log will include the incident number, date/time of occurrence, nature of the incident, general location, date/time reported, and disposition if known.

2. Records of a specific or general nature about former faculty, staff, or students who have been in contact with UCPD will be released to another criminal justice agency only when:
 - a. It is about a specific criminal or regulatory investigation that includes a signed waiver or as directed by the University of Cincinnati Office of General Counsel.

J. Access of News Media

1. The supervisor or senior officer in charge of any ongoing incident or investigation shall determine the scope of the scene and shall post officers and/or mark the area to prevent intrusion or contamination. All persons, including media personnel, have the right to be in a public place provided they do not intrude upon an area being controlled as a scene. All persons, including media personnel, have the right to possess and use any recording device. UCPD Officers shall NOT direct media personnel to leave any area that is open to the public. UCPD Officers shall not direct any person to not record or stop recording any activity while that person is in an area open to the public. UCPD Officers shall not interfere with such a recording or seize the recording device from the citizen or media personnel.
2. Persons in the custody of UCPD shall not be made available for media interviews.
3. Officers and employees will not make public statements about operations or incidents within and involving UCPD unless they have been designated the spokesperson for the incident or event.

K. Crime Stoppers and other media or press releases

1. If the circumstances arise where the use of Crime Stoppers or other press or social media releases is deemed appropriate, the assigned UCPD personnel will work with the PIO regarding messaging.
2. The final messaging will be approved by the Chief of Police or designee before release.

References

UCPD Policy 12.3.600 Social Media Policy