

	The University of North Carolina Greensboro Police Department	
	General Order 1-4.5	Public Information

Purpose and Scope

This policy provides guidelines for the release of official department information. It also addresses coordinating media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies, and other law enforcement activities.

Policy

It is the policy of the UNCG Police Department to protect the privacy rights of individuals, while releasing non-confidential information to the media regarding topics of public concern. Information that has the potential to negatively affect investigations will not be released.

A. News Media Relations

The UNCG Police Department will cooperate fully and impartially with representatives of the news media in their efforts to gather and disseminate factual information whenever these activities do not hamper an investigation or infringe on an individual's rights to privacy or a fair trial. Media representatives must comply with all state, federal, and local laws.

B. Authority to Release Information to the News Media

The Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications or designee (University Communications) is responsible for relations between the university and the news media. All media interaction will be in accordance with the official press policy of UNCG. The Chief of Police or designee will represent the department in releasing information to the media. The release of any information to the media must be approved by the Chief, or designee, or University Communications prior to its release.

University Communications or the Chief of Police, or designee, will:

- Assist news personnel in covering routine news stories and at the scene of incidents;
- Be available for on-call responses to media inquiries;
- Prepare and distribute news releases;

- Arrange and assist at news conferences;
- Coordinate release of suspect information;
- Assist in crisis situations; and
- Coordinate and authorize the release of information concerning joint investigations.

Each commander or designee has the authority to respond to inquiries from media representatives that are strictly related to his command. In addition, any officer who has personal knowledge of an incident may release accurate factual information relating to his normal duties to media representatives upon authorization by the Chief of Police. If an officer is asked for information regarding a case under active investigation or pending adjudication, or which concerns a major crisis or controversy, the officer will refer the news media representative to the Chief of Police or University Communications.

In order to provide media representatives with the most complete information possible, employees who have received inquiries from the press should contact University Communications. Oftentimes, University Communications will be able to provide additional information on the topic being discussed.

C. News Release/Press Conferences

All written news releases and press conferences must first be approved by the Chief of Police or University Communications. News releases and press conferences will be made when specific events dictate. Television, radio, and print media will all be treated equally in relation to news releases and press conferences.

D. Release of Investigative Information

Investigative information may be released only by the person responsible for the investigation, the Chief of Police or University Communications. Requests for information regarding a current investigation should be directed to the Chief of Police.

The following information concerning an investigation may be released unless it is otherwise restricted:

- The type or nature of an incident;
- The location, date and time, injuries, sustained damages, and a description of how the incident occurred;
- Amount and type of property taken, including value when known;
- The name, age, and address of an adult charged with a crime, and the charges against them;
- The fact that a juvenile has been taken into custody, including the juvenile's sex, age, and the charges against them; and
- Requests for help in locating evidence, a complainant, or a suspect.

It shall be the responsibility of the Chief of Police or University Communications to ensure that confidential or restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media. When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be consulted prior to releasing any information.

Restricted information includes, but is not limited to (N.C.G.S. § 7B-3000(b); N.C.G.S. § 126-22; N.C.G.S. § 126-24; N.C.G.S. § 132-1.2 through N.C.G.S. § 132-1.12; N.C.G.S. § 153A-98; N.C.G.S. § 160A-168):

Information that is not to be released in connection with an investigation includes the following:

- The identity or photograph of any juvenile who is suspected or accused of a crime, or any juvenile who is the victim of a crime.
- The identity of the victim of a crime, or any information that would lead to the victim's identification.
- The name or address of any witness to an incident other than the complainant.
- The name or address of a deceased or seriously injured person until the next of kin has been notified. (If a reasonable effort to locate next of kin has failed, the Chief of Police may authorize the release of information regarding the person.)
- The identity or location of a suspect before a warrant or Grand Jury indictment has been issued.
- The results of any investigative procedures such as a lineup, polygraph, or lab test. The fact that these procedures were done may be acknowledged without elaboration.
- Information that would interfere with an investigation or apprehension, such as unchecked leads, unverified information, specifics of modus operandi, details known only to the suspect, or information that may cause a suspect to flee or avoid apprehension.
- The existence of a suicide note may be acknowledged, but contents will not be released to the media.
- The name of an officer involved in an incident which leads to the death or serious injury of another person will be released as soon as possible and only after approval of the Chief of Police.
- Information contained in the personnel record of any member, unless otherwise specifically allowed by law.
- The amount of money taken in a robbery.
- Any information concerning student records, including university disciplinary charges, for which the dissemination is restricted by state, federal, or local laws.
- Information pertaining to pending litigation involving this department.
- Information obtained in confidence.
- Criminal intelligence information.
- Information contained in a 9-1-1 database that reveals the natural voice, name, address, telephone number or other information that may identify the caller, victim or witness (N.C.G.S. § 132-1.4(c)(4)).

- Emergency Response Plans.
- Sensitive public security information.
- Photographs and recordings of autopsies.
- DMV photographs and records prohibited by the Federal Driver Privacy Protection Act N.C.G.S. § 20-43; N.C.G.S. § 20-43.1.

E. Arrest Information

The following information may be released at the time of arrest:

- The defendant's name, age, description, address, and employment;
- The charge as listed on the warrant;
- The identity of the investigating or arresting officer;
- The circumstances surrounding the arrest;
- Description of any items or contraband seized;
- The amount of bond;
- The defendant's prior arrests and convictions that are a matter of public record; and
- Jail or "mug shot" photographs of the accused within the control of the department, unless the accused is a juvenile.

The following information should not be released after an arrest to ensure the defendant of a fair and impartial trial.

- The character or reputation of the defendant.
- The existence or contents of any confession or statement made by a defendant, or his failure to give a statement.
- Results of any tests or a defendant's refusal to submit to investigative tests such as a polygraph, unless the result or refusal is a matter of public record, such as Intoxilyzer tests.
- The identity, credibility, character, statement, or expected testimony of any witness or prospective witness.
- Any opinion about the guilt or innocence of a defendant or the merits of a case.
- The possibility of a plea bargain or guilty plea.

F. News Media Access to Person in Custody

Officers who have custody of a person will not permit news media interviews with prisoners. Employees will not deliberately pose a person under departmental control for photographs or filming.

G. Media Access to Crime Scene or Secured Area

The officer in charge of any ongoing investigation or operation will provide essential, factual information to the media at a scene. The officer may delay talking to the media if an emergency or serious situation exists, but should explain the reason for the delay, and then provide information allowed under this directive once the emergency is over.

Media representatives will be allowed access to disaster, crime, or incident scenes only when their presence will not interfere with the investigation, hinder the operation, or jeopardize the life or safety of another person. When access is initially denied, the officer in charge should explain the reason and then allow access as soon as possible.

Members of the police department will not authorize media representatives to enter private property. The citizen who has control of the property may allow access. The officer in charge will not allow the media to enter privately owned structures if the owner or legal possessor of the property is not available to permit or deny entry.

Police department employees will not deny or restrict the media or the public from taking photographs or film of an area or individual when that member of the media is lawfully in the area.

H. Incidents Involving Multiple Agencies

When more than one public safety agency is involved in an incident, the agency with primary jurisdiction will usually be the one to release information to the media. The UNCG Police Department's officer in charge at the incident will meet with the other agencies' representatives to determine how to coordinate and which agency will release information.

I. Public Information Crime and Fire Log

The UNCG Police Department will maintain a public information crime and fire log in accordance with G.S. §132-1.4(c)(1). This log will be made available to any member of the media or general public upon request.

The Department may routinely release information to the media without receiving a specific request. This may include media releases regarding critical incidents, information of public concern, updates regarding significant incidents, or requests for public assistance in solving crimes or identifying suspects. This information may also be released through the department website or other electronic data sources.

The Department will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities.

Log entries shall only contain information that is deemed public information and not restricted or confidential by this policy or applicable law. Upon request, the log entries shall be made available to media representatives through the Shift Supervisor.

The daily crime and fire log will generally include the date, time, location, case number, type of crime, and case status disposition.

J. Request for a Report

All requests for reports and or videos should come through <https://police.uncg.edu/reports/> and will comply with public records release and North Carolina General Statute §132-1.4A for video release.

K. Changes in Policy or Procedure

If the Chief of Police or University Communications changes the police department's policies concerning the media, the media will be consulted for input into those changes. Once the changes are made, members of the news media will be advised of the changes.

L. Public Information and Incident Command

When an Emergency Operations Center and/or a Field Command Post is established utilizing an Incident Command Structure, all interactions with the media will be coordinated through that structure and no other communications with the media are authorized.