
PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

Policy #1103-R04 (04/10/08)

Applies to all staff.

DEFINITIONS

Public Information. Information that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures or events involving the Sheriff's Office or other newsworthy information that is not legally protected from disclosure. The release of public information must be consistent with the mission of the Office, and should not unreasonably infringe upon the rights of a defendant or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of deputies, victims, witnesses or others.

News Media Representatives. Those individuals who are directly employed or contracted by agencies of the electronic or print media such as radio, television and newspapers.

Public Information Officer (PIO). The department's public information officer serves as a central source of information for release by the Office and responds to requests for information by the news media and the community. The PIO reports directly to the Sheriff.

1. The PIO is Responsible for Assisting News Personnel in Obtaining Information About Incidents in the jurisdiction of the Sheriff's Office.

The PIO will:

- Prepare and distribute news releases in a timely manner and fairly to all interested media organizations.
- Maintain a file of all releases distributed.
- Arrange for news conferences and interviews with personnel when needed.

2. The PIO Will Respond to the Scene of Major Incidents, Disasters, or Emergencies and Coordinate Media Relations and Interviews.

3. The PIO Will Coordinate and Authorize the Release of Information Concerning Confidential Investigations and Operations.

4. The PIO Will Coordinate the Release of Information When More Than one Agency is Involved.

5. Once a Case is Referred to the District Attorney Media Requests Regarding the Prosecution Will be Referred to the District Attorney.

The PIO may issue news releases with information regarding the case up to and including the arrest of a suspect. The PIO may continue to issue releases on additional suspects in the case where it is deemed appropriate and where it will not jeopardize the prosecution.

6. Staff Should Refer all Requests Relating to Release of Information to the PIO.

When the PIO is not available, staff should contact the on-duty Patrol or Jail supervisor, as appropriate, to designate an incident spokesperson.

Supersedes: 1103-R03 (05/07/07)

Position responsible for updates: Public Information Officer

CALEA: 54.1.1, 54.1.2

7. The PIO is Available on a Call-Out Basis to Facilitate the Office's Public Information Responsibilities.

- The PIO or a backup PIO will be available to Sheriff's Office command staff on a 24-hour basis. The PIO will electronically forward calls to the backup PIO to ensure a smooth transition.
- The PIO will respond to routine requests from the media during normal business hours.

8. Sheriff's Office Members Shall Contact the PIO if They Feel the Media Should be Notified Regarding an Event.

The following is a list of examples that the media may consider newsworthy:

- A certain pattern of criminal activity where the dissemination of public information might prevent other citizens from becoming victims
- When citizens have been especially helpful in solving a crime
- Incidents involving members or citizens in heroic or lifesaving actions
- Line of duty serious injuries or deaths of deputies
- Major civil disturbances, riots, etc.
- Confirmed sniper, barricaded subject, or hostage incidents
- Aircraft accidents
- Incidents involving the death or serious injury of citizens
- Bomb-related incidents where devices have detonated with substantial bodily injury or property damage
- Arrests involving prominent persons
- Missing or endangered persons

9. The PIO Will Distribute Changes in Policy and Procedure Affecting the Media to Media Representatives for Input.

The PIO will relay any feedback from the media to the Sheriff with a recommendation as to whether the suggestion would likely result in a more effective working relationship between Sheriff's Office and media personnel.