

	<b>FREDERICKSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVES</b>	
	<b>OPERATIONS SUPPORT</b>	
<b>622.00</b>	<b>APPROVED:</b> <i>Betsy C. Mason, Interim Chief of Police</i>	<b>Initiated:</b> 10/01/2007
		<b>Revised:</b> 02/09/2026

## PUBLIC INFORMATION

**622.00 – Public Information Officer** – The coordination and control of department-related information is a vital police function in that it directly affects ongoing criminal investigations, active court proceedings, and individual privacy rights. As such, the responsibilities of contacting and releasing information to the news media are the responsibility of the Public Information Officer (PIO); this simultaneously ensures that the department does not inadvertently release any inappropriate information regarding criminal matters and facilitates the rapid dissemination of information to the news media by establishing a single point of contact within the department. The Public Information Officer is on call 24 hours a day for media responses. If the Public Information Officer is unavailable for contact with the media, it will be incumbent upon the backup PIO or Deputy Police Chief to assume the responsibilities of the PIO. Upon the authorization of the Chief of Police or the Deputy Police Chief, it will be the responsibility of the Public Information Officer to: [CS 2.6.6, b]

- Assist media personnel in covering news stories at the scenes of incidents. [LE 54.1.1, a] [CS 2.6.6, a]
- Prepare and distribute agency press releases. [LE 54.1.1, b] [CS 2.6.6, c]
- Arrange for and participate in press conferences. [LE 54.1.1, c] [CS 2.6.6, d]
- Assist in crisis situations within the agency. [CS 2.6.6, f]

Aside from generic information pertaining to the scope of an investigation or the nature of a crime, the Public Information Officer will not release information regarding confidential investigations or operations. [LE 54.1.1, e] [CS 2.6.6, g]

The Chief of Police may direct the Public Information Officer to provide suggested guidelines for the use of social media by the department. [LE 54.1.1, g]

With respect to all other criminal incidents and investigations, the Public Information Officer will coordinate the release of information regarding victims, witnesses, and suspects, such as:

- Information contained in the public record.
- Information that is described by FOIA as “criminal incident information”, meaning a general description of the criminal activity reported, the date and general location the crime was committed, the identity of the investigating officer, and a general description of any injuries suffered or property damaged or stolen.
- The identity of the victim in a homicide or fatal accident. (The identities of sex crimes victims or deceased victims when the next of kin have not been notified may not be released)
- A request for assistance in apprehending a suspect or a warning to the public of any criminal dangers or threats.
- The name, age, residence, mug shot, and occupation of the accused, provided that an arrest has been made, a warrant/summons issued, or an indictment returned (unless the accused is a juvenile). This information should not be released if it will hinder an investigation or cause the subject to flee.
- Mug Shots
- The time and place the suspect was arrested, including details regarding resistance to arrest, pursuit, use of weapons, and injuries.
- General information regarding physical evidence that has been seized, unless it would disrupt or hinder an investigation. The PIO will receive permission from the investigating officer/detective or the officer/detective’s Division Commander, or his designee, prior to the release of any information concerning physical evidence.
- Information regarding scheduling or phases of the judicial process will be referred to the Commonwealth’s Attorney’s Office.

**NOTE: Nothing in the above section will prevent the release of information by a Communications Officer when utilizing the Loss Prevention Alert System.**

The Public Information Officer will not release the following information:

- Information bearing on the character, reputation, or prior criminal record (including arrests, indictments, or other criminal charges) of the accused.
- Any opinion as to the guilt of the accused or the possibility of a guilty plea to the charge or to a lesser offense.
- The existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement given by the accused or the refusal or failure of the accused to make a statement.
- The administration or results of any examinations or tests, such as polygraph exams or BAC tests, or the refusal or failure to submit to any examinations or tests. The PIO will receive permission from the investigating officer/detective or the officer/detective’s Division Commander, or his designee, prior to the release of any information such as the results of DNA testing or fingerprint matching through AFIS or other means.
- The identity, credibility, or potential testimony of any witness in the case.
- The identity of any individual providing information under guarantee of anonymity.  
[LE 54.1.1, d] [CS 2.6.6, e]

**622.01 – Public Information and Multiple Public Service Agencies** – Whenever an event occurs that involves this Department working with another public service agency (e.g. Fire Department, EMS), the agency possessing primary jurisdiction over the incident will be responsible for releasing relative information. This does not preclude the police department from releasing information pursuant to its specific involvement, although the primary agency should be made aware of this information before its release. The same policy will apply when working in cooperation with agencies of other governmental jurisdictions. Medical information released by this Department shall be limited to the apparent extent and type of injury noted at the time of the incident (e.g. head injury in an automobile accident due to striking the windshield; knife wound to arm during a fight; bullet wound in leg while cleaning gun), and if the person was transported to a medical facility. If a person refuses medical treatment or is treated at the scene and released, that information may be disseminated. [LE 54.1.1, f] [CS 2.6.6, h]

**622.02 – Changes to Public Information Policies and Procedures** – The department seeks to develop and maintain an effective working relationship with the media. In order to receive the media's input, the PIO will involve the press in the development of changes in policies and procedures relating to the public information function. [LE 54.1.2]

**622.03 – Media Access During Law Enforcement Operations** – Media representatives may be permitted access to incident scenes as described in the Code of Virginia § 15.2-1714. Media will not be granted entry to the scene itself (note: an incident scene is defined as an area secured by the police, fire, or EMS) if it compromises an active criminal investigation. It is important to note that the police may not invite the media into private premises without the consent of the owner or person in charge of the premises.

Further, news media representatives shall not be permitted to interview a person in custody, though such person may request an interview with the media following booking and incarceration in the jail. [LE 54.1.3]

**622.04 – Training** – Personnel assigned as a Public Information Officer or designated to perform that function shall receive training for the position. [LE 54.1.4]