

# Peoria Police Department Policy and Procedure Manual

## Policy 5.06 Public Information



**“Our Community...  
Our Commitment”**

### I. POLICY

The policy of the Peoria Police Department is to responsibly and promptly respond to requests for information by members of the news media. All members of the Peoria Police Department are encouraged to cooperate fully with the news media, within the guidelines of this policy, in providing information about the affairs of the Peoria Police Department.

### II. PROCEDURE

A. Release of Information: The news media will be informed of the occurrence of crimes, or other matters which are of public concern, as soon as possible. Members of the Peoria Police Department shall provide factual, accurate, and timely information to all news media on a fair and equitable basis. They shall do this without jeopardizing the rights of crime victims or the rights of persons accused of crimes, and without compromising the security of any investigation, or breaching any confidential relationship. Any request for information regarding a particular incident will be referred to the supervisor in charge of the investigation, the Public Information Officer On-Call (PIO) (if present), or the Records Management Supervisor in cases of Public Record report releases. Under no circumstances will information be released without first checking with the work unit responsible for the investigation. (41.2.5)

1. Personnel will refer all requests for information regarding a pending criminal investigation to the supervisor in charge of the investigation, or the PIO, if present.

2. The release of information regarding victims, witnesses, and suspects must first be coordinated and authorized by the designated PIO and the supervisor in charge of the investigation. (54.1.1.e)

B. PIO Responsibilities: The Peoria Police Department, in order to meet the needs of the press and the public regarding the dissemination of information, shall establish a PIO, who has specific responsibilities regarding the release of public information and the availability to respond to the news media through the Communications Section. The Peoria Police Department shall designate a primary and secondary PIO to address media issues. The primary PIO shall be the Peoria Police Department's primary contact with members of the news media. In the absence of the primary PIO, a secondary PIO will be assigned to assume these duties and responsibilities. The Peoria Police Department's PIO will proactively contact the news media on matters of public concern and in an effort to market the agency's accomplishments, community programs, and special events. It is the primary role of the PIO to establish positive working relationships with media representatives to build rapport and trust.

1. In addition to assisting on-scene supervisors in media inquiries during normal business hours, the PIO is also available to assist during any crisis situation that occurs within the agency. The PIO will also assist in preparing

information for release, whether media representatives are present or not. (54.1.1.f) (11.1.1)

a. The PIO will arrange a news conference when the Chief of Police or the designee determines it is necessary to disseminate information concerning police or criminal activities that are of a broad public concern. (54.1.1.d)

b. The PIO is responsible for the preparation and distribution of press releases. (54.1.1.c)

(1) Press releases are developed and distributed on an as needed basis.

(2) Press releases relating to a matter of public safety and concern are disseminated through the media alert system.

(3) Press releases relating to a matter of public interest will be distributed as determined by the PIO with the approval of the Chief of Police.

2. After-hours/Weekend Requests: When members of the media request information after normal business hours and on the weekend, they are to be directed to call the on-duty Shift Lieutenant or Sergeant. All contacts supervisors have with media shall be documented in the Exceptional Incident (EI) Log to include incident details, media outlet and reporter name. If this individual is not immediately available, the phone number of the caller will be taken by Communications personnel and given to the on-duty Shift Lieutenant or Sergeant who will make every attempt to return the call within thirty (30) minutes. During extraordinary circumstances, and after thirty (30) minutes, Communications personnel will contact the media representative and instruct them to call/page the On-Call PIO, or the Deputy Chief of Support Services, who will handle the media.

3. PIO Call-out: In order to respond to media interest in a timely manner, a supervisor at the scene of the types of police incidents described below will notify the On-Call PIO, who is available for call-out responses, as soon as practical if the On-Call PIO is needed to respond to the scene. Police incidents that may be of interest to the media include, but are not limited to, the following: (54.1.1.b)

a. Incidents where officers are involved in heroic or lifesaving actions, police shootings, or serious or fatal traffic accidents.

b. Homicides.

c. Major civil disturbances, riots, etc.

d. Confirmed sniper, barricade, or hostage incidents.

e. Aircraft accidents.

f. Bomb related incidents where a device has been found and/or detonated.

g. Robberies, thefts, or burglaries where exceptionally large amounts of property are taken.

h. Arrests involving prominent persons.

i. Any incident where the notification of the On-Call PIO is deemed necessary or desirable by the on-scene supervisor to handle media requests.

4. Media Relation Guidelines: The On-Call PIO will be available to assist news personnel in covering news stories and at the scene of any police related incident. (54.1.1.a)

a. Contacts between the news media and the police will be conducted in a courteous, professional manner. Employees who have not received PIO prior approval will refer the matter to a supervisor or the On-Call PIO.

b. Information not previously available to the On-Call PIO that is released regarding an ongoing criminal investigation will be reported to the On-Call PIO, in writing, as soon as possible.

c. Media representatives should not be excluded from the general vicinity of a crime or accident scene. However, entrance to any specific areas wherein evidence could be destroyed or compromised will be denied temporarily. Entry by media representatives into the area will be controlled by the supervisor in charge of the investigation. Yellow crime scene tape should be used to define the area that is restricted. (54.1.3.b)

d. Media representatives may be allowed entrance to police facilities if their presence will not impede facility operations.

e. The Peoria Police Department does not issue credentials to news media representatives. Media personnel who present their company credentials will be allowed access to police scenes in accordance with established policy.

f. For the safety of media representatives and photographers at the scene of major incidents (i.e., fires, airplane crashes, hazardous material situations, etc.), they will be alerted by officers concerning any known potentially hazardous situations. Their access to the scene shall be prevented until all risks concerning personal safety have been eliminated. (54.1.3.a)

(1) The media should be referred to the On-Call PIO who will be located at a designated area.

(2) If media presence at the scene of a

police incident appears to endanger others, or inflame a situation, the media representatives will be asked to move to a neutral location.

g. Photographers should not be restricted from taking pictures at the scene of a crime or accident. However, if any media representatives (including photographers) are on private property and the owner or custodian of that property desires that they leave the premises, officers will ask the media to move to public property. There are no restrictions that apply to the taking of pictures once on public property. (54.1.3.b)

h. Statistical information of a general nature, such as crime rate information, may be released to the media or other interested parties by the Support Division Deputy Chief or the designee.

i. When the Peoria Police Department is not the primary investigating agency, information or comments concerning investigations conducted by other agencies will not be released. Inquiries will be referred to the investigating agency.

j. Information released regarding incidents that involve multiple public service agencies in mutual efforts will be the responsibility of the agency having primary jurisdiction. PIOs of those agencies represented in such instances must coordinate their efforts. (54.1.1.h)

k. Information concerning the operation of the Peoria Police Department, that does not fall within the guidelines provided in this order, will not be released without prior approval of the Chief of Police, or the designee.

l. Release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations shall be coordinated and authorized by the PIO. (54.1.1.g)

m. If the PIO designate another employee to communicate with or disseminate to the media information, the PIO will contact and brief that employee directly.

5. Release of Information Prior to Arrest or upon Issuance of a Warrant: (54.1.1.e)

a. The following information may be released prior to an arrest or prior to issuance of an arrest warrant: (This will be coordinated with the Bureau in charge of the investigation and the PIO).

- (1) A description of the exact offense, including a brief summary of events.
- (2) Location and time of the offense.
- (3) General injuries sustained or damages resulting from the action.

(4) Identity of the victim (unless the victim is a minor or with approval of the Chief of Police or Deputy Chief of Police). Employees shall adhere to the Arizona Victims Bill of Rights and the Arizona Revised Statutes as it pertains to releasing victim information. Employees will not release information about victims if there is reason to believe doing so would result in unnecessary embarrassment or harassment, i.e., the victim of a sexual assault, or until next of kin notified where applicable.

(5) Whether or not there are suspects.

(6) Information about unidentified suspects such as physical description, vehicle description, or other information that may lead to the suspect's apprehension.

(7) Identification of fugitive suspects for whom a warrant has been issued.

(8) Criminal background of the fugitive or other facts when the public should be alerted to danger.

(9) Method of complaint (officer observation, citizen, warrant, indictment).

(10) Length of investigation and name of the supervisor in charge of investigation.

b. The following information will not be released prior to an arrest, or prior to the issuance of an arrest warrant:

- (1) Any information that would jeopardize the security of the investigation.
- (2) Identity of suspects who are interviewed but not charged.
- (3) Identity of witnesses when the disclosure would result in a probability of specific, material harm to the investigation, the privacy or confidentiality of a witness or victim, or the best interests of the State.
- (4) Exact identifying information about the weapon or other physical evidence.
- (5) Any information that could be known only to the guilty party.
- (6) Information about valuable items not stolen.
- (7) Conjecture about suspects or fugitives.
- (8) Misleading or false information.

6. Release of Information After An Arrest: This procedure applies to juveniles and adults. Release of this information will be coordinated with the Bureau in charge of the investigation and the PIO. (54.1.1.e)

a. The following information may be released:

(1) Time and place of arrest.

(2) Arrestee's name, address, Date of Birth (DOB), age, residence, employment, family status, marital status, and similar background. If a juvenile, the suspect must be detained at a juvenile facility prior to the release of information.

(3) The charge and circumstances of the offense.

(4) Facts and circumstances relating to the arrest such as resistance offered, pursuit, possession or use of a weapon, or description of contraband discovered.

(5) Description of property seized as evidence at the time of arrest, and information as to the purpose of a search warrant, if applicable.

(6) Name of investigating and arresting officers (provided identifying the officers will not place them in jeopardy), the length of the investigation, and whether there were witnesses. Names, addresses, and testimony of witnesses may be released, provided that such disclosure would not result in a probability of specific, material harm to the investigation, the privacy or confidentiality of a witness or victim, or the best interests of the State.

(7) An indication as to whether the suspect has made a statement, unless there is a substantial likelihood of materially prejudicing the proceeding.

(8) Employees may acknowledge that a DUI test was offered, or was not offered, in compliance with the law.

(9) Employees may release the fact that laboratory tests will or will not be performed on evidence.

(10) Results of any examinations or tests, provided that the release of the information will not result in a probability of specific, material harm to the investigation, the privacy or confidentiality of a witness or victim, or the best interests of the State.

(11) Description or results of the laboratory examination of physical evidence, provided that the release of the information will not result in the probability of substantial, material harm to the investigation, the privacy or confidentiality of a witness or victim, or the best interests of the State.

b. The following information will not be released:

(1) Comments about the character or reputation of a suspect or a witness.

(2) Re-enactment of the crime, unless done for the purposes of a "Silent Witness" or similar presentation.

(3) Comments about the credibility or expected testimony of a suspect or witness.

(4) If the information for the arrest was derived from an informant.

(5) Any opinion as to the guilt or innocence of a defendant or suspect.

7. Requests to View Police Reports: When a person makes a request to view a police report, the following procedure will apply.

a. Prior to releasing any report for viewing purposes, information that is not to be released as outlined in this chapter will be redacted.

b. A copy will be made of the redacted version to ensure that the information that has been withheld is not visible.

c. No monetary charge will be assessed for this process.

d. The person making the request will be advised of any anticipated delays in processing their request.

8. Suspect's Contact with Media Representatives: Suspects in custody at the police facility who request to see a media representative may do so only by making a written request. The supervisor in charge of the investigation will review the request. The appropriate Bureau Lieutenant and the PIO shall be contacted prior to the granting of the interview.

a. Requests from media representatives to interview a suspect in custody at the police facility will be referred to the suspect for their decision after review by the supervisor.

b. If the suspect wishes to grant an interview, officers may ask assistance from the media representative in gaining evidence concerning the crime.

c. Suspects being detained at County jail facilities will be required to contact County detention personnel for authorization to speak with members of the news media. Media representative(s) requesting to meet with suspects detained at County facilities will be referred to

that agency for authorization to conduct the interviews.

9. Photographs: Photographs of suspects may be released to the media. If a person is not wanted, and is under no suspicion of any continuing criminal activity, their photograph will not be released.

a. Photographs may be taken of a suspect exposed in transit, but the suspect will not be posed by an officer.

b. The primary investigating officer may release a photograph with the permission of a Bureau Lieutenant when:

(1) The aid of the public is sought in identifying or apprehending a suspect.

(2) The suspect has been arrested.

(3) Arrest numbers and other identifying information on mug shots have been removed.

c. Photographs of suspects will not be released if in-person or photographic lineups have yet to be conducted by investigators.

10. Death Information: Information released to the news media on the cause of death in cases under investigation by the Peoria Police Department will only be taken from the Medical Examiner's written report.

a. Employees will not attempt to interpret findings, and will refer such requests to the Medical Examiner.

b. If a Medical Examiner's Report is unavailable, requests for cause of death information will be referred to the Medical Examiner's office.

c. The identity of persons who have died will not be released to the media until the next of kin has been notified.

11. Release of Property Loss Amounts

a. Information regarding the amount of money or other items of value taken during any crime may be released to the media, except when the release of the information would result in a probability of substantial, material harm to the best interests of the State, or interest of privacy and confidentiality.

b. The decision to release information will rest with the supervisor in charge of the investigation.

12. Media Alert

a. Events or incidents of a public safety, or of a health or welfare concern that have an immediate impact on a

significant population or area of the City (i.e., natural disasters, major road closures, dangerous chemical spills, sniper incidents, etc.), should be immediately reported by a supervisor to the Communications Section so that an authorized supervisor can access the system and the public can be expeditiously informed of the problem via the Media Alert System. This system is a limited access conference call initiated by a designated supervisor which allows them to talk to numerous media outlets simultaneously.

b. The following positions have been authorized by the Chief of Police to access the Media Alert System:

(1) Chief of Police.

(2) Deputy Chiefs.

(3) Commander.

(4) Bureau Lieutenants/Managers.

(5) Emergency Operations Coordinator.

(6) Public Information Officer.

(7) Other alternates as designated by the Chief of Police.

13. Public Appearances by Employees: Because of the numerous requests from the various media sources and public groups to present personnel of the Peoria Police Department in films, advertisements, presentations, etc., formal approval will be obtained from the employee's Bureau Lieutenant prior to the employee taking part in such activities. The PIO should also assist in the coordination of these events.

a. All requests for media appearances will be coordinated by the appropriate Bureau Lieutenant and the PIO. The script, the geographical or subject areas to be covered, the type of program, etc., will be evaluated prior to giving permission to the employee.

b. Public appearances before local groups for the purpose of discussing police problems will be authorized through the Chief of Police.

c. Nothing in the policies and procedures shall prevent employees from making statements relating to news items which do not violate the guidelines established in these orders.

14. Peoria Police Department Employee Information Line – The Peoria Police Department Employee Information Line is a dedicated telephone line to provide accurate and timely information to department employees about any significant event that may concern them. The telephone number assigned is (623)773-5050.

a. The on-call PIO will be responsible for activating and maintaining the information on the information line.

b. The on-call PIO will be notified by the Duty Commander or any other Command Staff member when it is determined the line needs to be activated.

c. The message to be left on the information line shall be pre-approved by the Support Division Deputy Chief or their designee.

d. The information provided will be updated daily by the PIO unless circumstances require more frequent updates.

e. The information line will remain active until the Support Division Deputy Chief advises the PIO to deactivate the line.

f. After the information line has been activated the following will take place:

(1) The PIO will send an all e-mail to department employees advising the information line has been activated and how to access it.

(2) The PIO shall notify the on-duty Communications Supervisor who will send an MDC message to all on-duty officers advising them of the line activation.

15. Policy Review: Prior to the review date of this policy, the Public Information Officer shall provide a copy of this policy to local news media personnel requesting their review and input. (54.1.2)

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