

## News Media Relations

### 346.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for media releases and media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities.

### 346.2 RESPONSIBILITIES

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Chief of Police. However, in situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief of Police and in situations where the Chief of Police has given prior approval, Deputy Police Chief of Operations, Patrol Commanders, Patrol Lieutenants and designated Public Information Officer may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable law.

The news media will be informed of the occurrence of crimes, or other matters which are of public concern, as soon as possible. (41.2.4)

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.c)(46.3.3)

Press releases relating to a matter of public interest will be distributed as determined by the PIO or other designees of the Chief of Police (54.1.1b)

### 346.2.1 MEDIA REQUEST

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement situation shall be referred to the designated Department media representative, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor. Prior to releasing any information to the media, employees shall consider the following:

- At no time shall any employee of this department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from a supervisor or the designated Department media representative.
- In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to the release of any information by this department.
- (54.1.1.f)
- Under no circumstance should any member of this department make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police.
- 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.d)

### 346.3 MEDIA ACCESS

Authorized members of the media shall be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities subject to the following conditions:

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The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.

Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.

- Reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the Department Public Information Officer or other designated spokesperson. (54.1.3)

No member of this department shall be required to submit to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved employee.

Media interviews with individuals who are in custody shall not be permitted unless in compliance with a jail facility policy. Exceptions are only permitted with the approval of the Chief of Police and the express written consent of the person in custody.

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 tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the news media shall be permitted within the outer perimeter of the scene, subject to any restrictions as determined by the supervisor in charge. Department members shall not jeopardize a tactical operation in order to accommodate the news media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through a supervisor or the Public Information Officer.

### **346.3.1 TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS**

Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or officer safety or significantly hampers incident operations, the field supervisor should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Patrol Lieutenant. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident. It should be requested through the appropriate control tower. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration should be contacted (14 CFR § 91.137). All requests for TFR should be routed through the Patrol Lieutenant.

### **346.3.2 PROVIDING ADVANCE INFORMATION**

To protect the safety and rights of officers and other persons, advance information about planned actions by law enforcement personnel, such as movement of persons in custody or the execution of an arrest or search warrant, should not be disclosed to the news media nor should media representatives be invited to be present at such actions except with the prior approval of the Chief of Police.

Any exceptions to the above should only be considered for the furtherance of legitimate law enforcement purposes. Prior to approving any exception, the Chief of Police will consider, at minimum, whether the release of information or presence of the media would unreasonably endanger any individual, prejudice the rights of any person or is otherwise prohibited by law.

### **346.4 SCOPE OF INFORMATION SUBJECT TO RELEASE**

The Department will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities that shall be made available, upon request, to media representatives through the Patrol

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Lieutenant. This log will consist of data classified as public and should generally contain the following information: (54.1.1.d)

- The date, time, location, case number, type of crime, extent of injury or loss and names of individuals (except confidential informants) involved in crimes occurring within this jurisdiction, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation.
- The date, time, location, case number, name, birth date and charges for each person arrested by this department, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation.
- The time and location of other significant law enforcement activities or requests for service with a brief summary of the incident subject to the restrictions of this policy and applicable law.

Identifying information pertaining to a juvenile arrestee or witness shall be publicly released unless a court of competent jurisdiction finds a clear public interest in confidentiality (Ariz. Const. Art. 4, Pt 2, § 22(3)).

At no time shall identifying information pertaining to a juvenile victim be publicly released without prior approval of a competent court when access to the data would reveal the identity of a victim or alleged victim (Ariz. Const. Art. 4, Pt 2, § 22(3)).

Identifying information concerning deceased individuals shall not be released to the media until notification of next of kin or the notification is otherwise cleared through the Medical Examiner.

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.

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

Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in this log shall be referred to the designated media representative, the custodian of records, or if unavailable, to the Patrol Lieutenant. Such requests will generally be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Arizona Public Records Law (ARS§39-101, et seq.).

#### **346.4.1 STATE RESTRICTED INFORMATION**

It shall be the responsibility of the authorized employee dealing with media requests to ensure that restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media by this department (See the Security and Release of Records and Information Policy and the Peace Officer Personnel Files Policy). When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be obtained. Examples of such restricted information include, but are not limited to:

- The identities of involved officers only when the release hinders a law enforcement purpose or reveals the identity of an undercover law enforcement officer and as otherwise required by law.

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- Photographs of an officer without his/her permission except as provided in ARS § 39-123(C).
- Copies of traffic collision reports except to those authorized pursuant to ARS§28-667.
- Information that would tend to endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation (ARS § 36-3503(B)).
- Information pertaining to pending litigation involving this department.
- Information obtained in confidence.
- Any information that is otherwise privileged or restricted under state or federal law.
- Information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations. (54.1.1.e)

### **346.5 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.