



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



360.01 MEDIA RELATIONS 5/12/20

PURPOSE

This policy provides guidelines for the Sacramento Police Department (SPD) members' interaction with the news media.

POLICY

The Sacramento Police Department shall work with the news media and its representatives to make timely information available as well as facilitate access when possible to matters of public concern.

RESPONSIBILITIES

A. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

1. The Public Information Officer(s) (PIO) duties shall include, but are not limited to:
 - a) Handling of the daily news media inquiries regarding police activities occurring within the city limits, as well as questions relative to ongoing criminal investigations.
 - b) Responding to the scenes of prolonged major incidents, disasters, or emergencies upon request of the Chief of Police (COP), Office of Investigations (OOI) supervisor or a Watch Commander.
 - c) Responding to media requests for information as soon as practical.
 - d) Coordinating media requests for SPD members interviews, interviews with the (COP), media news conferences, and responding to media questions concerning Department policy.
 - e) Coordinating ride-alongs requested by the media.
2. The PIO shall maintain an on-call list for media liaison representatives consisting of SPD members selected by the COP who have been trained to perform the duties of the PIO.
3. The PIO representatives on the on-call list shall be subject to recall 24 hours a day, seven (7) days a week, and subject to call outs from OOI supervisors, Incident Commanders, Watch Commanders, or designee.

B. OFFICE OF INVESTIGATIONS

1. Division Captain shall ensure:
 - a) All media inquiries are forwarded to the PIO for follow up.
 - b) Press releases drafted by OOI units shall be sent to the PIO for approval and dissemination.
2. Detectives in charge of a crime scene who request to have the PIO respond to the scene shall make the request to the respective Watch Commander or designee.

C. COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

1. Communications Division supervisors and/or their designee(s) should:
 - a) Serve as a point of contact for any media inquiries when the PIO is unavailable. The Communications Division shall refer the media to the on-duty Watch Commander when the PIO is unavailable.
 - b) Ensure information released to the media representatives includes the hundred-block and street name of the location of the event or incident (including the names of commercial businesses, schools, restaurants, etc.) unless the release of information could potentially impede an investigation, jeopardize safety or otherwise disrupt police activity.
 - c) Refer media representatives to the PIO office during normal business hours.



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



- d) Refer media representatives to the PIO office for information regarding prior events, daily log activity, or community tips not related to a developing event.
- e) Notify the on-duty Watch Commander and the PIO of potentially newsworthy events during PIO office business hours.

D. OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

1. Watch Commanders shall:
 - a) Determine if the PIO should be called to handle an ongoing event or incident.
2. If the media request is for routine information, and the information is not immediately available, or its disclosure would otherwise be impracticable, refer the requestor to the PIO.

E. GUIDELINES FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION THAT DOES NOT COMPROMISE AN INVESTIGATION

1. Information released by the PIO or designee shall be pursuant to Government Code section 6254(f) (1-2).
2. Suspect/arrestee photographs or interviews
 - a) Officers who have suspects in custody shall not move or pose them for media pictures.
 - b) Officers shall not prevent any person from photographing or videotaping suspects, arrestees, or department personnel in public places where they have no reasonable expectation of privacy unless there is a safety concern or other strategic reason (i.e., endangering safety of involved parties, personnel or there is a pending investigation).
 - c) Suspects in SPD police custody shall not be interviewed by media representatives.
3. Cases being submitted to the District Attorney's office
 - a) Once a preliminary hearing has begun, SPD members shall not comment to the media on any case, or any defendant in the case.
 - b) Media requests shall be referred to the Sacramento County District Attorney's office.

F. POLICE REPORTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Crime reports or incident reports involving juveniles may only be released pursuant to applicable laws.
2. The PIO shall only release photographs and/or mugshots of adults to the news media when:
 - a) it may aid in the investigation;
 - b) it may assist in the apprehension of the suspect;
 - c) it benefits public safety; or
 - d) if release of the photographs does not compromise the investigation (i.e., prior to a photographic or live lineup).
3. The PIO shall not release photographs of juvenile suspects/arrestees to the news media unless authorized by the COP.
4. Photographs of missing persons may be released to the media after the authorizing parent, guardian or other authorized party has given verbal authorization on camera via the use of the Body Worn Camera.

G. VICTIM, WITNESS OR SUSPECT INFORMATION

1. A general injury status of a victim, witness or suspect may be released to the media if it does not compromise an active investigation.
2. The identity of a decedent may be released to the media by the Department only after the Coroner's Office has notified the next of kin and the identity has been made public by the Coroner's Office, or if authorized by the COP.



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



3. The contents of suicide notes shall not be released, although it may be reported that a note was found.

H. CONDUCT OF SPD MEMBERS

1. SPD members shall forward a memorandum through their chain of command to their Captain and/or OOC concerning any unethical or unprofessional conduct by members of the media.
2. SPD members should honor provided verbal identification or media credentials for individuals who identify themselves as media representatives.
3. Media representatives requesting access to an otherwise restricted area (i.e. a crime scene or emergency area) must verbally identify themselves or provide a media credential.
 - a) Options to verify press credentials include a review of news websites for on-air talent, or calling the assignment desk to verify the employee's name. Members of the press should be able to provide the assignment desk contact information to officers.
 - b) Individuals claiming to be freelance journalists to include independent bloggers, may not be affiliated with a media network, and therefore may not have verifiable press credentials to display. They should be able to provide a press contact capable of verifying their press status.
4. SPD members shall not interfere with the media's right to gather and disseminate news and shall strive to ensure media representatives are not hindered in their news gathering efforts.
5. No SPD member while on-duty shall pose as a media representative without an investigative justification and the expressed permission of the COP or designee.
6. Information concerning Department policy or administration shall be furnished by the PIO or designee.
7. SPD members shall not use their Department contact with the media as a means of publicity for personal reasons.
8. The PIO shall be notified of any interview requests and the topic to be discussed prior to granting the interview being arranged. The PIO shall inform the OOC Captain and the employee's chain of command of the interview.
9. SPD members assisting other law enforcement agencies with mutual aid incidents or with other incidents occurring outside the City of Sacramento shall refer news inquiries about these incidents to the outside agency. Officers shall not release information concerning these incidents furnished to the Department by other agencies unless the information resulted from a Department investigation.
10. SPD members who are asked for information shall refer all inquiries to the PIO or Watch Commander.

I. PUBLIC RELATION PHOTOGRAPHS

1. Requests for public relation photographs to be taken at a special public or Department event shall be submitted to the PIO office.

J. MEDIA ACCESS

1. SPD members shall accommodate the media in accordance with this policy.
2. Media representatives may enter a closed disaster scene at their own risk if they do not "impede" emergency personnel in the performance of their duties. When an area is closed, media representatives will be accommodated with whatever limited access to the sites may be afforded without material and undue interference to emergency personnel. The right of access by the media is described in Penal Code section 409.5 (d) PC.
3. When a crime scene or emergency area has been established, media interfering with or jeopardizing operations may be detained and/or arrested pursuant to Penal Code sections 148 (a) 1 PC, 148.2 PC, and Vehicle Code section 2800. If a media representative is detained or



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



arrested, the incident commander shall immediately notify the Watch Commander and the PIO should be notified as soon as possible.

4. 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 Watch Commander. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident and 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).
5. Media representatives shall not be allowed free access within an SPD facility without an SPD provided escort. If media representatives are observed without an escort, in an area other than the Public Information Counter, SPD members shall ask the individual to leave the unauthorized area and should escort the individual from the restricted area. The PIO office and/or Watch commander shall be notified of the incident.
6. SPD members shall not exclude any media representative from an area to which the public has access or a right of access.
7. A tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the media representatives shall be permitted within the outer perimeter of the scene, as determined by the supervisor in charge. SPD members shall not jeopardize a tactical or public safety operation to accommodate the news media. Any request from the media shall be coordinated through a supervisor who will coordinate with the PIO.
8. No SPD member of the Department who is under investigation shall be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved SPD members (Government Code section 3303(e)).

K. CIVIL DISORDER

1. The media has a right to cover demonstrations, including the right to record an event on video, film or in photographs.
2. Pursuant to California Penal Code sections 407 and 409, an assembly may be declared unlawful, and all persons present, including members of the news media, may be lawfully ordered to disperse.
3. Media representatives shall comply with any dispersal order given; failure to comply could result in detainment and/or arrest.
 - a) After a dispersal order has been given, a reasonable effort should be made to provide an observation area for the media that is sufficiently near the incident to allow observation which will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. Media representatives in this assigned area would not be subject to arrest or detainment.
4. Self-identified legal observers and crowd monitors do not have the same legal status as the professional media and are, therefore, subject to all laws and orders similar to any other person or citizen.
 - a) Said observers and monitors must comply with all dispersal orders similar to any other person or citizen. A supervisor or incident commander may allow a person who self-identifies as a legal observer or crowd monitor to remain in an area after a dispersal order. A reasonable effort should be made to establish an observation area for the observers and monitors independent of the media representatives that is sufficiently near the incident to allow observation which will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation



SACRAMENTO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS



operations. Observers and monitors in this assigned area would not subject to arrest or detainment.

5. On request, the Incident Commander, the PIO or a supervisor may inform media representatives, legal observers, crowd monitors, police liaison, and/or organizers about the nature of any criminal charges to be filed against arrestees, the location where arrestees are being taken, and the Department's intent for arrestees to be cited out or booked at a custodial facility.
6. Media representatives, legal observers, crowd monitors, police liaison, and/or organizers shall never be targeted for dispersal or enforcement action because of their status.

L. COMMERCIAL FILMING DEPARTMENT ACTIVITIES/FACILITIES

1. All requests made by commercial production entities must be submitted to the PIO for review and approval as appropriate.
2. Commercial productions intended for viewing by the public in which profit is the main motive shall be scrutinized and require approval by the COP.

M. PROVIDING ADVANCE INFORMATION

1. 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 COP or designee.
2. Any exceptions to the above should only be considered for the furtherance of legitimate law enforcement purposes. Prior to approving any exception, the COP or designee 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.

N. RESTRICTED INFORMATION

1. It shall be the responsibility of the PIO handling media requests to ensure that restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media by the Department. When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be obtained.

O. CONTENT-AND-VIEWPOINT NEUTRALITY

1. Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, any restriction on the media or the right to gather and disseminate news and information must be reasonable as to the time, place and manner of the restriction. Such restriction must be content-neutral, narrowly tailored to serve a significant governmental interest, and must leave open ample alternative channels for communication. SPD members shall never take enforcement action against an individual because of their viewpoint or interests.