



CHESAPEAKE
POLICE
DEPARTMENT

DIRECTIVE: POLICY & PROCEDURE

NUMBER:
1.5.1

SUBJECT: PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

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05/10/11

REFERENCE:

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Reviewing Authority:

Wilfredo Bonilla, Jr
City Attorney

Issuing Authority:

Kelvin L. Wright
Chief of Police

05/10/11
Effective Date

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the functions of the Police Department's Public Information Officer (P.I.O.).

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Department that members of the news media contact, or be referred to, the P.I.O. during normal office hours for routine interest information, daily news releases, police reports, etc.

III. PROCEDURE

A. Appointment and Authority

1. The P.I.O. is appointed by the Chief of Police and will coordinate news media releases within the Department. The P.I.O. will report directly to the Investigations Bureau Commander.
2. The P.I.O. will carry out any other assignment designated by the Chief of Police.
3. Although performing on behalf of the Department with regard to news media relations, the P.I.O. will have authority only commensurate to the rank he/she holds.

B. Functions of the Public Information Officer

1. Furnish information to the Investigations Bureau Commander, in conjunction with the Command Duty Officer, regarding major incidents that are likely to generate more than the routine news interest.
2. Establish and maintain a good rapport and working relationship with members of the news media and members of the Department.
3. Prepare and distribute Department news releases.

4. Respond to or refer the day-to-day request(s) for information which may be generated from the media or the general public concerning Departmental activities.
5. Arrange for news conferences, as required or requested, and provide adequate physical facilities for these conferences.
6. Release information on major incidents, including victim and suspect information when appropriate and consistent with legal requirements and Departmental policies.
7. Coordinate and authorize the release of information as approved by the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.
8. Identify news agencies and maintain a current roster of agency phone numbers and reporters assigned to report on Police Department activities.
9. Either the P.I.O. or the on-call P.I.O. will be available after normal working hours via pager to perform the liaison duties between the media and the Department. Members of the media can contact the P.I.O. via the Emergency Dispatch Center (E.D.C.) supervisor. During normal business hours, requests for information should be directed to the P.I.O.'s office.

C. Notification and Response of the Public Information Officer

1. Any **major incident** likely to attract news media attention shall be brought to the attention of the P.I.O. without delay by the ranking supervisor at the scene, who may direct the on-duty E.D.C. supervisor to make the notification.
2. Upon notification, the P.I.O. will make and maintain contact with the supervisor/officer-in-charge of the scene and determine what location is to be used as an assembly point for the media and notify E.D.C. of the location.
3. When the location has been established, all releases to the media will be made from that location. It will be the responsibility of the P.I.O. to maintain contact with the supervisor/officer-in-charge to ensure up-to-date, accurate information is provided to the media.
4. Situation briefings will be provided to the P.I.O. to relay to the media on a timely basis. When possible, such briefings will include key personnel involved in the situation who can give factual, firsthand, updated reports on a situation.
5. When speaking on behalf of the City or the Police Department, personal opinions **will not** be given.

6. When the P.I.O. releases information through mass-produced publications, brochures, news reporters, or other mass-communication channels, the officer must provide this information to the City's Public Communications Department. This information shall be given to the Public Communications Department in advance, if practical, or as soon as possible after the release of the information.
 7. No press releases will be given regarding highly sensitive or questionable matters without prior approval from the Chief of Police or his designee.
- D. All press releases from the Police Department will be accomplished by one of the following:
1. By the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.
 2. By the Command Duty Officer or supervisor-in-charge of any major incident or occurrence.
 3. By the Police Department's P.I.O.

NOTE: At the scene of any serious incident, the ranking supervisor on the scene will be responsible for the proper dissemination of information in the absence of the P.I.O. The releasing officer will notify the P.I.O. as to the content of the release as soon as possible.

- E. Members of the Department are directed to refer all questions from the news media regarding **any** matter, directly or indirectly related to their duties, to one of the above listed persons. When necessary, members may obtain permission to release requested information from one of the above listed persons.



CHESAPEAKE POLICE DEPARTMENT

POLICY & PROCEDURE

1.2.2



Subject: News Media Relations

Effective Date: 11/01/2010

CALEA Standard(s): 46.1.3 (f)

Revision Date: 02/20/2020

Issuing Authority: *Colonel Kelvin L. Wright*

Reviewing Authority: *Daniel Wisniewski*

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures which will facilitate the flow of information between the Department, the news media, and the public. In addition, this policy will provide guidelines for releasing information to the news media pertaining to major incidents, criminal investigations, and internal matters.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Chesapeake Police Department to maintain a relationship of trust, cooperation, and mutual respect with the news media. The Department recognizes the right of the public and the news media to be fully and accurately informed on all matters concerning public safety. To achieve this goal, the Department will support the free flow of information between the various sections of the Department and the news media.

III. PROCEDURE

A. News Media Information

1. All news media representatives will display or present official news media identification from their respective agencies when requested.
2. News media representatives will receive police information only after verification of identity.
3. Upon request, the Department will provide complete and accurate information to the news media, within legal and investigatory limitations.
4. News media representatives should contact the Public Information Officer (PIO) Monday through Friday 0900 to 1700 hours for daily news releases, routine interest information, police reports, etc. This is in no way intended to restrict or hinder the release of information concerning the Police Department and/or its activities by the City's Public Communications Department.

B. All press releases from the Police Department will be accomplished in the following manner:

1. By the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee

2. By the Command Duty Officer or supervisor-in-charge of any major incident or occurrence
3. By the Police Department's PIO

NOTE: At the scene of any serious incident, the ranking officer on scene will be responsible for the proper dissemination of information in the absence of the PIO. The releasing officer will notify the PIO as to the content of the release as soon as possible.

- C. Members of the Department are directed to refer all questions from the news media regarding any matter, directly or indirectly related to their duties, to one of the above persons. When necessary, members may obtain permission to release requested information from one of the above persons.
- D. Allowing Persons to Enter Area of a Serious Police Incident
1. Police lines (perimeter) may be established to ensure safety and to protect the integrity of a crime scene. News media access may be authorized by the officer-in-charge, and only after an area has been safely secured and/or all crime scene processing has been completed.
 2. Officers may not authorize news media representatives to trespass on private property. News media representatives must obtain permission from the property owner.
 3. Members of the Department should be cognizant of §15.2-1714 of the Code of Virginia, Establishing police lines, perimeters, or barricades. The last paragraph of this statute states: "Personnel from information services such as press, radio, and television, when gathering news, shall be exempt from the provisions of this section except that it shall be unlawful for such persons to obstruct the police, firefighters, or emergency medical services personnel in the performance of their duties at such scene. Such personnel shall proceed at their own risk."
- E. Release of Information
1. No member of the Chesapeake Police Department is authorized to release any confidential or investigatory information contained in Department files to the news media or the public unless authorized to do so, verbally or in writing, by the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.
 2. When speaking on behalf of the City or the Police Department, personal opinions **will not** be given.
 3. Matters pertaining to Department policy, administration, and/or personnel transactions will be released by the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.
 4. Information released should be limited to the facts pertaining to the event or the safety and welfare of the public. Information that may be sensitive or have

implications relating to litigation or personal privacy should not be discussed. Information or speculation which deals with broader issues or policies of the City or the Police Department should be directed to the City's Public Communications Department or the Office of the Chief of Police.

5. When releasing information, the Chief of Police and the City's Public Communications Department must be notified prior to the release or, if not practical, immediately thereafter.
6. The following information may be released, except as noted in the provisions of Subsection F of this policy:
 - a. The type of event or crime when accurately known
 - b. Known facts and circumstances relating to the crime which will not hinder or prejudice the investigation (location, time, items and quantities involved, etc.)
 - c. Whether or not there are suspects and general descriptions of suspects, if known
 - d. Requests for assistance in locating suspects or evidence
 - e. Number of officers or people in an event or investigation, if such information is requested and would not hinder the investigation or interfere with police operations
 - f. Identity of an investigating/arresting officer, providing such information does not jeopardize or compromise members assigned to undercover or special operations
 - g. The name, address, description, employment, and marital status of a person for whom a warrant has been issued
 - h. Facts and circumstances of an arrest, including the time and place of the arrest and any pursuit or resistance encountered
 - i. The exact offense charged, a brief description of the offense, and the method of complaint (i.e., officer, citizen warrant, indictment, summons, etc.)
 - j. Information concerning non-prejudicial items of evidence may be released (e.g., money, weapons, etc.) Information may also be released concerning the general fact that physical evidence is being examined.
 - k. Photographs of a person accused by indictment or warrant without police identification on them
 - l. Where the identity of a suspect has not been established, it may be desirable to publicize a description, artist's sketch, or other information

which could lead to the identity and arrest of the suspect.

- m. Fugitive cases may require wide publicity. While, as a general rule, criminal records should not be publicized, it may be desirable and in the public interest to disclose such records of fugitives when the patterns of their crimes indicate that the public may be the victims of fraud or personal injury.
- n. Pretrial release or detention arrangement (i.e., amount of bond, location of detention, etc.)
- o. The identity of a deceased or seriously injured victim after the next of kin have been notified and the ranking investigating officer has approved the release of the name

F. Non-Releasable Information

1. It is the responsibility of the investigating officer to consult with his/her immediate supervisor before releasing information not covered by this policy, or information that may adversely affect the outcome of a current investigation.
2. At the time information is denied to the media in response to a legitimate inquiry, the denial shall be supported by a courteous, logical, and adequate explanation, which can be justified upon further inquiry. Failure to do this can unnecessarily damage the positive efforts to build good police-media relations.
3. Requests for information regarding any investigation not released at the scene of the crime shall be directed to the PIO for follow-up.
4. The identity of the following shall never be revealed except as required by law or by the approval of the Chief of Police:
 - a. A person under 18 years of age taken into custody
 - b. A complainant under 18 years of age
 - c. An abused or neglected child
 - d. A victim of a sex crime (including sexual assault and abuse)
 - e. A person taken into custody in connection with mental illness
 - f. Upon request of any crime victim, the address, telephone number and/or the place of employment of the victim or the victim's family
 - g. A detailed description of suspects or evidence which could hinder or prejudice the investigation
 - h. Arrest records

- i. The existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement given by the accused, his/her refusal or failure to make a statement or his/her refusal to perform any test or examination
- j. Personal opinions about the suspect, his/her guilt or innocence, mental status, anticipated plea, value of evidence against the accused or possible disposition of the case
- k. Statements, testimony or credibility of victim/witness
- l. Information regarding the quality or quantity of any evidence
- m. Information of a purely speculative nature
- n. Results of fingerprint comparisons, ballistic tests, polygraph examination or other physical or scientific examinations
- o. The identity of suspects who are interviewed but not charged
- p. Information which may be inflammatory or prejudicial to a defendant's rights
- q. The identity of any deceased or seriously injured person prior to notification of next of kin
- r. The contents of a suicide note or electronically recorded message
 - (1) Such written or recorded message is to be considered personal and confidential and shall not be made public.
 - (2) The fact that a suicide note exists may be reported without further comment.
- s. Specific cause of death until announced by the State Medical Examiner or his/her Deputy
- t. Home address and/or telephone number of any member of the Department
- u. Unofficial statements concerning internal matters, policy, and/or personnel issues concerning the Department
- v. The identity of any Department member involved in a serious incident such as a shooting, automobile accident, etc.
 - (1) Such information will not be made available until all investigations are completed and then only with the approval of the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.
 - (2) This time period shall depend on the circumstances of the incident and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

G. Interviews and Photographs

1. Photographs or video audio recordings may be taken from any area that news media representatives have been given access.
 - a. Officers may restrict the use of flash, strobe, or high intensity lights when the use of such equipment would hinder a police operation or endanger officers or citizens by exposing them to unnecessary risks.
 - b. This restriction could also apply to a live, on-the-air broadcast, if such a broadcast may endanger officers or citizens as referenced above.
2. Police officers shall not pose themselves with a suspect nor enter into any agreement to have a suspect in custody at a prearranged time or place to be photographed, televised or interviewed.
3. Police Department photographs or video/audio recordings of the following shall not be released except by the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee:
 - a. Crime Scene
 - b. Suspects or accused suspects prior to an actual arrest
 - c. Victims of any crime, accident, or suicide
 - d. Juveniles
 - d. Members of the Department
4. News media representatives may have access to the following areas of the Chesapeake Police Department:
 - a. Any area open to the public
 - b. Any designated area set aside for news media briefings
 - c. Any area in which news media representatives are accompanied by a member of the Department.

H. Other requests for information will be granted only with prior authorization from the Chief of Police or the Chief's designee.

I. Internal Matters

All inquiries regarding internal investigations will be directed to the Commanding Officer of the Ethics & Conduct Unit. Such inquiries will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

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J. Jurisdiction

When the Chesapeake Police Department is involved in a mutual effort with other service agencies outside of this Department's jurisdiction, it will be the responsibility of the agency having primary jurisdiction to release or coordinate the release of information to the news media.