

III. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

- A. The Department will respond to information requests from the news media, subject to legal restraints and the necessity to preserve evidence, when the requested information does not hinder investigations or violate the constitutional rights of the accused. Information will be limited to direct facts of what occurred and will not include identities of victims or suspects, or speculation as to cause, motive or future implications of the event.
- B. The on-duty supervisor will advise who will talk to the media when the Media Relations Officer or Command Staff are not present. Only specific, preliminary information relating to the incident will be provided to the media until the Media Relations Officer arrives. As soon as possible, notification should be made to the Media Relations Officer of any information released to a media representative.
- C. The scene supervisor shall ensure that the basic facts of the occurrence are transmitted from the incident scene to the Media Relations Officer when media interest in the incident is expected.
- D. The watch commander shall ensure that notification is made to the next watch in a timely manner when media interest is expected.
- E. The withholding of information from the media because it might hinder the investigation will be done only at the request of the scene commander or primary investigator.
- F. Types of information that can normally be released to the media include the following:
 - 1. Routine Crime News
 - a. The daily crime summary of property related crimes and those incidents which effect public safety.
 - b. Basic information regarding an incident to which police have responded may be provided to the media representatives. Care must be taken not to release information which could interfere with a successful criminal investigation. The identities of juvenile offenders, the names of sex crime victims, their identifying characteristics and the names and exact addresses of crime witnesses should not be released.
 - c. All media inquiries made to Department employees who are uninformed on the subject of the inquiry; or who have reservations concerning the release of information, will refer the media representative making the inquiry to the officer in charge of the scene or the Media Relations Officer, if available.
 - 2. Major Incident News
 - a. The Media Relations Officer will be notified and will respond to the scene of major incidents when extensive media coverage is anticipated.

- b. The Media Relations Officer will set up operations in the command post to keep informed about developments. A media staging area will be established outside of the secured perimeter.
 - c. Media briefings will be scheduled as the situation dictates.
3. Administrative/Policy News

Information regarding Department policies, administrative activities or internal investigations may be released to the news media only by the Chief of Police or his designated representative.

4. Crime Victim / Witness Information to be released

INDIVIDUALS:

As a general rule, it is the policy of the Ballwin Police Department to withhold the names and personal information of both victims and witnesses of crimes from the public. This is done in the interest of victim/witness services and to protect those parties involved. If the victim or witness wishes to be contacted by the media, the department Media Relations Officer will facilitate this contact and ensure that the needs of the victim/witness are addressed.

BUSINESSES/ORGANIZATIONS:

Information relative to businesses or organizations such as schools that become the location of a crime generally will be released to the media in the interest of the public. This may include addresses, names and locations of the business or school. If this information could potentially jeopardize a person, or the investigation, then this information will be withheld. The details of the crime including dollar value of property crimes will be released only with permission of the Chief of Police or his designee.

IV. NEWS RELEASES

The Ballwin Police Department shall issue a written news release concerning Department activity when deemed appropriate by the Chief of Police.

- A. When a news release is issued, the Media Relations Officer, or an authorized designee, will ensure that the release follows the guidelines of Section III, Release of Information, of this General Order and is made available to all legitimate West St. Louis County news media outlets.
- B. The news releases will be in written form and will be approved by the Chief of Police or Commander of the Bureau of Administration and Operational Support, except in exigent circumstances when time is a critical factor.
- C. After a written release has been made, the officer making the release will, as soon as possible, forward or deliver a copy of the release to the Chief of Police, and any supervisors who are affected by the content of the news release.

- D. All news releases shall be created on the Ballwin Police Department Press Release form (BPD 86). The release should also contain the date the release was issued, a name and phone number for media representatives to contact for further information, and the name of the person who authorized the release.
- E. Supervisors other than the Chief of Police or Commander of Administration and Operational Support may make or authorize a written news release in the following circumstances:
 - 1. Road conditions made hazardous by snow, ice or flooding
 - 2. To announce lengthy, but temporary traffic detours due to traffic accidents or other traffic hazards.
 - 3. Routine information in regard to fatality traffic accidents.
 - 4. To advise of malfunctioning traffic signals.

V. MEDIA INTERVIEWS

Media interviews are permitted by prior authorization of the Chief of Police, or his designate, with members of the Department concerning incidents/investigations they are assigned to, or law enforcement topics about which they have direct knowledge. Answers should be limited to known facts.

A. Individual Interviews

Regarding a major incident, the appropriate personnel to answer reporter questions are the scene commander, the division commanding officer, the chief investigator or a Media Relations Officer. The Media Relations Officer should be notified of all media interview requests of an employee of the Department. In all cases refer to Section III, B of this policy.

B. News Conference

A news conference format with one or more representatives may be utilized when the Department has information it wishes to distribute to as many media representatives as possible at the same time. Upon request, the Media Relations Officer will advise the media of the time, place and subject matter of the news conference and prepare a written news release for distribution to reporters who attend.

VI. ARREST INFORMATION

A. Prisoner Status

When extensive media coverage is anticipated, the Media Relations Officer is to be notified when, or if, warrants are issued, the amount of bond and where the prisoner is incarcerated.

B. Evidence

So as not to prejudice future prosecution, release of the specific type of evidence which links an arrested suspect to a crime should be avoided.

C. Photographs

Arrested suspects may be photographed by the media while being escorted by police. Mugshots of arrested suspects or wanted suspects with prior convictions may be released with permission of the case officer.

D. Sunshine Law

All arrest information will be released pursuant to the regulations of the Sunshine Law of the State of Missouri.

VII. MEDIA ACCESS TO SCENES

A. Crime/Accident Scenes

Crime scene security shall be maintained at all times. News media does not have the authority to be within a crime scene or area which has been secured to preserve evidence or any location where their presence jeopardizes police operations. Media access at crime scenes will be strictly monitored so as not to interfere with any ongoing investigation. A designated media assembly area should be established, and all media personnel should be addressed at that location. Any further media access will be determined by the on-scene commander, case investigator or commander/supervisor from the Division of Criminal Investigations.

B. Civil Disturbances, Riots, Disasters, Major Fires

Media access will be restricted if, in the judgment of the scene commander or other competent authority, access would unduly hamper or seriously jeopardize the successful conclusion, or containment, of the event or situation.

C. Media Personnel Entering a Restricted Area

Duly authorized representatives of any news service, newspaper, radio or television station or network may enter any area closed because of a menace to the public health or safety. The decision to assume the risk of danger remains with the individual newsman involved, and it is not the responsibility of officers to provide for the safety of those members of the news media who voluntarily choose to subject themselves to danger.

D. Media Personnel Not Exempt From Laws

Media personnel's primary responsibility is to report the news by obtaining information and photographs at newsworthy incidents. Their opportunity to do so is frequently momentary at an emergency scene. An officer sharing these circumstances with a newsman should not unnecessarily obstruct the newsman in the performance of his duty;

however, members of the news media are neither by implication or expression exempt from any municipal, state or federal statute.

E. Requesting Withholding of Publication

Media personnel may photograph or report anything they observe when legally present at an emergency scene. Where publication of such coverage would interfere with an official investigation, place a victim, suspect or others in jeopardy or premature notification of the next of kin the withholding of publication is dependent upon a cooperative media, not upon censorship by the Department. Under such circumstances, the Media Relations Officer, on-duty supervisor or case investigating officer should advise the media representative or their superiors of the possible consequences of publication; however, department personnel may not interfere with newsmen's activities as long as that performance remains within the confines of the law.

BY ORDER OF: Chief Steven Schicker 1/14/15
Steven Schicker, Chief of Police Date

ATTESTED BY: Robert Kuntz 1/26/15
Robert Kuntz, City Administrator Date

cc: City Attorney

MPCCF REFERENCE

31.1, 31.2, 31.3, 31.4