

THE RALEIGH POLICE DEPARTMENT

1106-02

NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

PURPOSE

To establish policy and procedures concerning the accurate and appropriate release of information to the news media and to establish a protocol for the release of information at crime scenes and other events

VALUES REFLECTED

This directive reflects our values of *Fairness, Integrity, Accountability* and *High Caliber Service*. We recognize that a spirit of cooperation, openness and candor is essential in fostering the support and trust of the community we serve. We will respond in a professional and timely manner to requests for information, safeguarding the constitutional rights of any individual, acting in accordance with applicable laws, and protecting the integrity of criminal investigations and prosecutions.

UNITS AFFECTED

All Divisions/All Personnel

REFERENCES/FORMS

DOI 1106-1 "Confidentiality and Release of Information"
DOI 1109-1 "Patrol Operations"

GENERAL POLICIES

The Raleigh Police Department works cooperatively with representatives of the news media, receiving direction and guidance from applicable statutes, accepted law enforcement and media practices, and the particular needs and circumstances of individual incidents.

The Department is committed to maintaining the trust, cooperation, and support of the public we serve. Achieving this objective relies, in part, on providing the community with information about the Department's administration and operations.

The Department will assist media representatives by making appropriate information available in a timely manner. Information released by the Department shall comply with the requirements of DOI 1106-01 "Confidentiality and Release of Information." As used in this procedure, the term "release" means any communication with or distribution of information to representatives of the news media.

Media representatives will be provided copies of this procedure and advised of any changes.

No employee shall pose as a member of the media for the purpose of conducting an investigation or for any other purpose. This does not prohibit employees from attending press conferences or other meetings covered by the media, so long as they do not identify themselves as members of the media.

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

The Department's principal point of contact with the media is the Public Information Office. To avoid confusion or duplication and to ensure uniformity, the Public Information Officer or designee will, under normal circumstances, provide information to the media or authorize the release of such information.

News media representatives will be directed to the Public Information Officer or designee when inquiries are made. During non-business hours, the Watch Commander will normally serve as the designee.

NEWS RELEASES

The Public Information Officer or designee will authorize news releases. News releases pertaining to Departmental policy, staffing, organization, or budget issues, including programs that are in developmental stages, will be authorized by the Chief of Police, or designee. The release of information that involves more than one city department or outside agencies will typically be coordinated with the other involved entities prior to release.

Chief of Police, Duty Major and Watch Commander

The Chief of Police, Duty Major and Watch Commander are authorized to release information to the media in order to facilitate justice or public safety. Such releases should comply with applicable guidelines.

Written News Releases

The Public Information Officer will maintain a system for providing written news releases to the media and for appropriately distributing them within the Department.

MEDIA REQUESTS AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

During normal business hours, media requests for news information will be referred to the Public Information Officer. At other times, requests for information on occurring events will be referred to the Watch Commander.

Information concerning matters that are likely to produce media inquiries should be communicated as soon as practicable to the Public Information Officer during normal business hours and to the Watch Commander at other times hours.

Information about special events and occurrences that involve the Department will be provided to the Public Information Officer as needed for the preparation of news releases or the scheduling and coordination of media briefings.

ACCESS TO CRIME SCENES AND OTHER INCIDENT AND EVENT LOCATIONS

Representatives of the media have the same access permitted to other members of the general public and will not be prohibited from entering into or photographing from any areas accessible to the general public. The limits of access granted to members of the general public will be determined by the requirements of the incident.

As needed, media representatives will be informed about accessible areas, about areas that have been secured and restricted such as crime scenes, and about any particular restrictions that might apply.

Media representatives will be allowed access to any street, sidewalk or public area that is accessible to the general public during an incident or event. When utilizing such access, media representatives are responsible for complying with all applicable laws, ordinances and regulations.

Media Assembly Area

In some instances, to ensure that safety and necessary order are maintained, a media assembly area will be created to provide a designated location for media representatives and for the dissemination of information.

Barricaded Areas

In some instances, such as parades, rallies, and demonstrations, media representatives with appropriate press credentials may be admitted past police or fire barricades and roadblocks that have been established to restrict entry by the general public. Such access will not be afforded to crime scenes or areas determined to pose unreasonable risk to health or public safety.

Privately Owned Property

Police officers will neither provide nor deny access to media representatives onto privately owned grounds.

NEWS MEDIA INTERACTIONS

News Media Input

The Public Information Officer will communicate at least annually with representatives of the media to solicit their observations and proposals for changes in Departmental media procedures. The Public Information Officer will convey the input provided by the media to the Chief of Police for consideration.

News Media Identification

Members of the Raleigh Police Department may require adequate identification of media representatives prior to permitting them access to controlled or secured areas. The Raleigh Police Department does not normally issue credentials to media representatives and relies on media organizations to provide appropriate identification to their representatives.

News Media Conduct

If a member of the Department concludes that a representative of the media has not acted in a professionally proper manner the issue should be brought to the attention of the Public Information Officer. The Chief of Police and the Public Information Officer will determine whether follow-up contact with the media organization is appropriate and whether any additional actions should be taken.