



**California State University, Los Angeles**  
**Department of Public Safety**

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NUMBER: I-9 APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_  
Joseph Curreri, Chief of Police

EFFECTIVE: April 19, 2012

SUPERSEDES: 5/1/2010 Reviewed/Revised: April 19, 2012

SUBJECT: **Public Information and Media Policy**

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I. PURPOSE.

This policy is designed to provide specific guidance to personnel regarding media relations and the release of information.

II. POLICY.

- A. It is the policy of this Department to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the Department. This will be done as long as these activities do not unduly interfere with departmental operations, infringe upon individual rights or violate the law. Release of information will comply with Government Code §6254.
- B. The Director of Public Safety is the primary contact point for providing accurate information to the news media. The Director may delegate this duty to another employee.
- C. Statements of policy expressing official positions of the Department, official responses to criticism of the Department, statements pertaining to pending civil litigation, internal investigations, disciplinary matters, and officer involved use-of-force situations shall be made only by the Director, or the Director's designee.
- D. The Director of the University Office of Public Affairs is designated as the official spokesperson for the University and is responsible for responding to all media inquiries pertaining to University policies, procedures, personnel and University-wide issues.

III. DEFINITIONS.

- A. Media. All public information sources, including newspapers, magazines, radio, television, photographers, electronic news sources, and news documentary producers.

- B. News Media Inquiries. Refers to questions related to University or Department policies, procedures, personnel, events, and/or actions.
- C. Public Information. Information that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures or events involving the Department or other newsworthy information that is not legally protected, which does not unduly interfere with the mission of the Department; does not infringe upon the rights of a defendant; or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of officers, victims, witnesses or others.
- D. Authorized News Media Representatives.
  - 1. Those individuals who are directly employed by agencies of the electronic and print media such as radio, television and newspapers. Those individuals will be in possession of press credentials issued by a public safety agency or the individual's employing agency.
  - 2. Other authorized media representatives include students who are assigned as reporters for a University newspaper in the CSU system. These reporters will have identification issued by their publisher and will be afforded the same privileges as credentialed press at the scene of newsworthy events.
- E. Public Information Officer. Serves as a central source of information for release by the Department. The Public Information Officer also responds to requests for information by the news media and the community. This is the responsibility shared by the Chief of Police (or designee) and the University's Public Information Director for this campus.
  - 1. The Chief of Police shall serve as the Department's Public Information Director and will have the responsibility for the release of information on a daily basis to media representatives about the operations of the Department. The Chief of Police will:
    - a. Coordinate and authorize the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations;
    - b. Work with the Public Information Director in the preparation of news releases; and
    - c. Keep the President's Office and the University's Public Information Director informed of any incidents that may attract media attention.
  - 2. The University's Public Information Director will serve as the Public Information Officer (PIO) with responsibility for the release of information at major events affecting the University community. The Public Information function under the PIO includes will:
    - a. assisting media personnel in covering news stories at the scenes of incidents;
    - b. preparing and distributing agency media releases;
    - c. arranging for, and assisting at media conferences;
    - d. coordinating and authorizing the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects;
    - e. coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations; and

- f. developing procedures for releasing information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort.

#### IV. PROCEDURES.

- A. The Department, in coordination with University Public Affairs, will cooperate with and assist members of the news media in their information gathering, as long as investigations are not jeopardized, police operations are not interfered with, or officer safety is not endangered.
- B. The Records Clerk will release copies of reports as is outlined in this procedure upon the authority of the Director, or designee.
- C. The law requires that **CERTAIN INFORMATION MUST BE DISSEMINATED** to the media [California Government Code 6254(f), see Records directives for further information and specifics].
  1. Under the guidelines, information is releasable to:
    - a) authorized representative of the victim;
    - b) to an insurance carrier against which a claim has been made or may be made; and
    - c) to any person suffering bodily injury or property damage as a result of an incident of arson, explosion, fire, vehicle theft, and/or larceny.
  2. A suspect requesting copies of his/her arrest and/or crime report will be referred to the appropriate prosecutor's office.
  3. Persons with a subpoena for records will be referred to the Chief of Police.
  4. Information that is releasable under the above guideline includes:
    - a) names and addresses of persons involved in the incident [exception: confidential informants, victims of sex crimes, and juveniles unless the victim is filing a claim with the State Board of Control per Government Code 13968(d);
    - b) description of any property involved;
    - c) date, time, and location of incident;
    - d) statements of parties involved in the incident; and
    - e) statements of all witnesses, except confidential informants.
  5. Disclosure will not be made of that portion of the report that reflects the analysis or conclusion of the investigating officer.
  6. No information will be released if such disclosure would endanger the successful completion of the investigation.
  7. Any employee receiving a request for a copy of a police report will provide the person requesting and ask them to complete a 'Request for a Copy of Police Report' form. It will normally take three working days to process the request.
- D. The following information is considered public information and is releasable to any person.
  1. Arrestee information.
    - a) The full name, current address, and occupation of every adult person arrested by this Department.
    - b) The arrestee's physical description [date of birth, color of eyes, hair color, sex, weight, and height].

- c) Date and time of arrest.
  - d) Date and time of booking.
  - e) Location of arrest.
  - f) Factual circumstances surrounding the arrest [not opinions or conclusions].
  - g) Amount of bail set.
  - h) Time and manner of release or location where the arrestee is being held.
  - i) All charges which arrestee is being held, including outstanding warrants and probation and parole holds.
2. Incident information.
    - a) Time, substance, and location of all complaints or requests for assistance.
    - b) Time and nature of response, including:
      - time, date, location of occurrence;
      - time and date of report;
      - name, age, and current address of victim [exception: victims of sex crimes, and juveniles unless the victim is filing a claim with the State Board of Control per Government Code 13968(d)]; and
      - the factual circumstances surrounding the crime or incident.
    - c) The general description of:
      - Any injuries confirmed;
      - Any weapons involved; and
      - Any property involved.
  3. The above information is public information and shall be released to the public, except to the extent that disclosure of a particular item of information would endanger the safety of any person involved in the investigation or would endanger the successful completion of the investigation or a related incident.
  4. Anytime information is released to the media, the employee releasing the information will contact the on-duty command officer [Lieutenant] and the Chief of Police, as soon as practical.
- E. The law permits the Department to **WITHHOLD CERTAIN INFORMATION**. The following information is not releasable at any time, unless approved by the Chief of Police.
1. Prior to the arrest, do not release the identify of the suspect.
  2. Prior to the arrest, do not release the results of the investigation.
  3. Release of the information in items (a) and (b) may be made, if approved by the Chief of Police, in cases in which it will:
    - a) aid in the investigation;
    - b) assist in the apprehension of the suspect; and/or
    - c) warn the public of danger.
  4. Prior criminal record, reputation, or character.
  5. Identity or any personal information of a juvenile arrestee or suspect.
  6. Existence or contents of any confession, or statements given by a suspect or the refusal to make a statement.
  7. Any opinion about the possibility of a plea of guilty to offenses charged or a lesser offense or either disposition.

8. Performance of any examinations or tests or the suspect's refusal to, or failure to submit to an examination or test.
  9. Any photographs or mug shots except if the release will:
    - a) aid in the arrest of the suspect;
    - b) aid in the investigation; and/or
    - c) warn the public of danger.
  10. The identity, testimony, or credibility of prospective witnesses.
  11. Any personal opinion as to the suspect's guilt, innocence, or merits of the case.
- F. In addition, employees shall not:
1. disclose the name of a deceased person (suspect/victim) until confirmation has been received that the next of kin have been notified.
  2. move or pose suspect solely for the purpose of allowing photographs to be taken. However, do not prevent photographers from taking un-posed pictures in public places.
- G. On-call responses to the news media shall consist of the notification of:
1. On-duty Command Officer [Lieutenant];
  2. Chief of Police; and, if necessary (dependant on issue and time factors)
  3. The University Public Information Officer.
- H. Release of Information During Mutual Efforts – The University Police Department is frequently involved in mutual efforts with other public service agencies, e.g. Los Angeles Police Department.
1. The agency having primary jurisdiction shall be responsible for releasing and coordinating the release of related information.
  2. All public inquires for the release of information pertaining to the Department's involvement in mutual efforts shall be referred to the Chief of Police.
  3. The Public Affairs Director shall refer media inquires to the primary jurisdiction responsible for the mutual effort.
- I. Press relations and media access (including photographers) to disasters, major fires, crime scenes, mass arrest operations, and other special or catastrophic events must be controlled when such access would interfere with law enforcement operations.
1. While the Department may exclude members of the general public from a disaster area for safety reasons, the media is exempt from this exclusion and must be allowed into the disaster zone (409.5 P.C.).
  2. The media, however, may be restricted from specific areas within a disaster scene when police personnel at the scene reasonably determine that unrestricted media presence will interfere with emergency operations. Restrictions on media access will be imposed only for so long and only to the extent necessary to prevent actual interference.
  3. As soon as a disaster or accident has been identified and secured, authorized media shall be permitted free access to the affected area after being advised of any existing danger.
  4. Department employees shall not decline to protect news media personnel who are in danger, but employees will not provide an escort into and out of

the danger zone. In general, authorized media members are to be permitted free movement in the area as long as they do not hamper, deter, or interfere with the law enforcement or public safety function.

5. Crime scenes may be closed to all unauthorized persons, including the news media. Unlike a disaster scene, the media does not have a constitutional right to enter and may be legally excluded. Crime scenes, which are located in the areas of public access, may be opened for media inspection after any search, preservation, and processing of evidence has been completed and the scene secured. Reporters and photographers shall be kept at a sufficient distance (outer perimeter) from the scene to protect it from being disturbed, or evidence being destroyed or contaminated.
  6. News media representatives have no more right of access to private property than the general public. Therefor, media representatives are subject to any public access restrictions placed by the owner or person in charge of the property when a crime scene is located on private property.
  7. The scene of a Departmental tactical operation is the same as a crime scene, except authorized news media shall be permitted within the outer perimeter of the scene subject to any restrictions as set forth by the Department employee in charge of the operation. Department employees shall not jeopardize a tactical mission in order to accommodate the media, but every effort shall be made to keep them informed of the progress of the operation.
- J. Any person who delays, obstructs, or impedes a police officer in the performance of their duties is subject to arrest for a violation of 148 P.C. This includes the news media. Arrests will only be made as a last resort and only in particular aggravated cases.
- K. The parking of press vehicles by members of the media actually engaged in the gathering of news falls under an exemption to provisions of the Traffic Code, provided that a press card is properly displayed in the front and rear windows of the vehicles. Specific locations where new gathering vehicles can not park are:
- a) Tow-Away Zones;
  - b) Truck loading zones;
  - c) Sidewalk access ramps [News vehicles shall not park within three feet of any access ramp constructed adjacent to a crosswalk for use by the physically handicapped]; and
  - d) News vehicles must be parked with due regard for access of fire department equipment and vehicles.

V. APPENDIX: None.