

DUNCANVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT REGULATIONS

SUBJECT: Media Relations	SECTION: 6.05
EFFECTIVE DATE: April 9, 2010	APPROVED:
AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: N/A ISSUED:	Robert D. Brown, Jr. Chief of Police

I. POLICY

It is the policy of this law enforcement agency to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the Department, as long as these activities do not unduly interfere with departmental operation, infringe upon individual rights or violate the law.

II. DEFINITIONS

A. 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, does not unduly interfere with the mission of the Department, infringe upon the rights of a defendant, or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of officers, victims, witnesses, or others.

B. News Media Representatives - Those individuals who are directly employed by agencies of the electronic or print media such as radio, television, and newspapers. Freelance workers in this field are to be regarded as other members of the general public unless otherwise designated by the Chief of Police.

III. PROCEDURES

A. Cooperation with the Media

1. Authorized news media representatives shall have reasonable access to the Chief of Police or the Assistant Chief of Police and operations of the Department as governed by this policy. When information must be denied to a media representative, the basis for that denial shall be fully and courteously explained.
2. On an annual basis, the Chief of Police will involve the news media in the review of departmental policy or development of changes in department policy and procedure relating to the public information function. The purpose of the input is to build a more effective working relationship with them. While the Chief of Police seeks input from the media, the final decisions regarding police policy and procedure will be made in the best interest of the public, the Department, and within the confines of applicable law.
3. Public information shall be released to the media as promptly as circumstances allow, without partiality, and in as objective manner as possible.

4. Public information may be provided to media representatives by telephone if the identity of the representative is known or can be authenticated.
5. Ranking officers at crime or incident scenes will assist news personnel in covering stories and may release information of a factual nature to the media as governed by this policy or they may refer the inquiry to the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief of Police, or the City of Duncanville's Public Information Officer. When the officer is unsure of the facts or the propriety of releasing information, he/she shall refer the inquiry to the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief of Police or the City of Duncanville's Public Information Officer.
6. Press releases pertaining to police department business will be prepared by the City of Duncanville's Public Information Officer with the assistance of the Chief of Police or Assistant Chief of Police.
7. In lieu of the Public Information Officer's absence, the Crime Prevention/Community Relations Officer will prepare press releases and all contact with the media.
8. The on-duty watch commander shall be responsible for ensuring that the Chief of Police is informed as soon as possible of events that may have media interest.

B. Investigative Information

1. From the initial stage of a criminal investigation until completion of trial or disposition without trial, police personnel shall refer all requests for investigative information to the Chief of Police or the Assistant Chief of Police who will coordinate and authorize release of information concerning victims, witnesses, and suspects. This will be done through a written press release, press conference, or interviews with the media. Assistance in this duty may be required by supervisors, officers and other support personnel.
2. Information that may be released in connection with an investigation of an event or crime includes:
 - a. The type or nature of an event or crime;
 - b. The location, date and time, injuries sustained, damages, and a general description of how the incident occurred;
 - c. Type and quantity of property taken;
 - d. The identity and approximate address of a victim with the exception of sex crime victims, and in other cases where reprisals or intimidation may be employed;
 - e. Request of aid in locating evidence, a complainant or a suspect;
 - f. Number of officers or people involved in an event or investigation, and the length of the investigation; and
 - g. The name of the officer in charge of a case, his supervisor and division or unit assignment. (Exception: the name of any undercover officer will not be released).
3. Information that may not be released in connection with an investigation of an event or crime, unless authorized by the Chief of Police or Assistant Chief of Police.
 - a. The identity of a suspect prior to arrest unless such information would aid in apprehending the suspect or serve to warn the public of potential danger;

- b. The identity of any victim of a sex crime or any related information which, if divulged, could lead to the victim's identity;
- c. The identity of victims or witnesses if such disclosure would prejudice an investigation to any significant degree, or if it would place the victim in personal danger;
- d. The identity of any juvenile who is a suspect or defendant in a case subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court;
- e. The identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to notification of the next of kin;
- f. The results of any investigative procedure such as lineups, polygraph tests, fingerprint comparison, ballistics test or other procedures (the fact that these tests have been performed may be revealed without further comment);
- g. Information which, if prematurely released, may interfere with the investigation or apprehension such as the nature of leads, specifics of an "MO," details of the crime known only to the perpetrator and the police or information that may cause the suspect to flee or more effectively avoid apprehension;
- h. Information that may be of evidentiary value in criminal proceedings;
- i. Specific cause of death unless officially determined by a medical examiner;
- j. The home address or telephone number of any member of the Department; and
- k. Information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations.

C. Arrest Information

- 1. Following arrest, issuance of an arrest warrant, or filing of any information or indictment, it is permissible to release:
 - a. The accused's name, age, residence, occupation, and family status;
 - b. The time and place of arrest, whether pursuit or resistance was encountered, whether weapons were used, charges placed against the suspect, and a description of contraband seized;
 - c. The identity of the arresting officers and the duration of the investigation unless the officers are engaged in undercover operations; and
 - d. The amount of bond, scheduled court dates, and place of the suspect's detention.
- 2. Following the arrest and formal charging of a suspect, but prior to adjudication, the following types of information should not be released without express permission of the Chief of Police or Assistant Chief of Police.
 - a. Prior criminal conviction record, character or reputation of a defendant.
 - b. Existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement of a defendant, or his failure or unwillingness to make a statement.
 - c. Performance or results of any tests or a defendant's refusal or failure to submit to tests such as a polygraph.

- d. Identity, statement, or expected testimony of any witness or victim.
- e. Any opinion or knowledge of the potential for a plea bargain or other pretrial action.

D. Privacy Protection Act

In accordance with 42 U.S.C. Section 2000, officers shall not search or seize the work product (film, notes, recordings, etc.) or equipment from a reporter or photographer in an effort to further a criminal investigation or prosecution of a criminal case if the person in possession of the materials is reasonably believed to have a purpose to disseminate the information to the public, a newspaper, book, broadcast or other similar form of public information.

E. Special Considerations

1. Sensitive information relating to internal investigations of police personnel shall not be released without the express permission of the Chief of Police.
2. Daily administrative reports of criminal activity (public copies) will be made available on a routine basis to media representatives. Statistical reports of criminal activity will also be made available to the media, and is posted on the Department's web site.
3. At no time will a media representative be allowed or invited to accompany police personnel into the private residence or business of an individual during a police raid.