



DEPARTMENTAL
GENERAL
ORDER

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54.1.2; 54.1.3

Departmental Public Information Officer
Media Releases
Public Information

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The purpose of this order is to set forth Departmental policy and procedures regarding the release of police information, and establish the position and duties of a Public Information Officer.

I. POLICY

- A. Members and employees shall respect the freedom of the press. Media representatives shall be treated in a fair and impartial manner.
- B. Reasonable efforts shall be made to assist credentialed media representatives in reporting news in accordance with Departmental policy and procedures. To the extent practical, the Department's Public Information Officer (PIO) shall be utilized to respond to, and coordinate media responses to requests for information and interviews.
- C. In order to maintain an effective and cooperative working relationship between the Department and media personnel, media representatives may provide input to the development of Departmental policies and procedures relating to the public information function.

II. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER – DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Public Information Officer (PIO) is assigned to the Office of Chief of Police.
- B. The PIO shall act as liaison between the Department and the media and is the spokesperson/coordinator of the Department's response to the media on matters described in Part III of this order.

- C. The PIO shall respond to questions from the media or refer them to the responsible person or agency. Duties of the PIO include, but are not limited to:
1. Assist news personnel in covering routine stories and at incident scenes.
 2. Coordinate, with unit commanders and assigned investigators, the release of designated public information.
 3. Prepare and distribute press releases and media advisories.
 4. Arrange and stage-manage news conferences held by the Department.
 5. Review media pass applications, annual renewals, and issue temporary media passes.
 6. Assist other City agencies and departments at news conferences, as directed by the Chief of Police.
 7. Actively seek newsworthy or interesting facts about Department personnel and programs and issue proactive, positive stories about the Department, its members and employees.
 8. Coordinate the release of authorized information concerning confidential Departmental investigations and operations.
 9. Maintain communications with field/incident commanders during major incidents and natural disasters as described in Part III, D.

III. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

A. General Guidelines

1. The Department shall strive for the prompt release of information to the public, through the media, on matters affecting public safety.
2. Media requests for information or interviews should be coordinated through the PIO when practical.
3. Members and employees may answer general inquiries from the public or media regarding law enforcement functions.
4. Members answering inquiries regarding specific criminal investigations shall follow the guidelines set forth in Government Code Section 6254(f) and reproduced here as Part III, E.
5. Members and employees may elect to refer press inquiries to their supervisor or the PIO and should do so if uncertain about what information can or cannot be released.
6. Members and employees shall never represent opinion as fact.

B. Information to be Referred to and/or Released by the Public Information Officer (PIO)

1. All inquiries relating to Departmental policy.
2. Criticisms of the Department that require an official response.
3. Police investigations that may have legal ramifications for the Department.
4. Statements pertaining to pending or on-going civil litigation involving the Department or its employees.
5. Information concerning internal investigations, civil litigation, disciplinary matters, officer-involved shootings, or any

information that a member or employee believes could infringe upon individual rights.

6. Requests to film police facilities and/or personnel for the purpose of advertisement and/or television/film productions.
7. Information contained in draft publications and Departmental memoranda.
8. Any inquiries where a member or employee is uncertain about what information is or is not releasable to the public.
9. Those criminal incidents which, due to their nature, affect on the public, or the stature of the alleged perpetrator/victim, could be reasonably assumed to attract wide media interest.
10. Major incidents (Refer to Part III, D).

C. Other Releases

1. Information relating to police personnel recruitment, training requirements, and general personnel related materials may be released by the Recruiting Unit *or* the PIO, during normal business hours.
2. Information relating to criminal investigations (including gambling, vice, and narcotics), except those noted in Part III, B, may be released through the investigative unit assigned *or* the PIO.
3. Information relating to statistical, budgetary, planning issues or other administrative reports may be released by the Research, Planning and Budget Division, Crime Analysis Unit *or* the PIO.

D. Release of Information during a Major Incident

1. Field supervisors, commanders, and assigned investigators may respond to immediate questions from the media received at the scene of major incidents, such as homicides, accidents

involving serious injuries, barricaded suspects, or crime-in-progress situations.

- a. Field supervisors, commanders, or investigators may request that the Communications Division initiate a call-out of the PIO or ask that the PIO place him/herself in a standby position.
 - b. When called to the incident scene, the PIO will assume responsibility for coordinating media requests, assisting command with public statements to the media, and keep command informed of media activities.
2. In the aftermath of a large scale natural disaster, the PIO shall coordinate Departmental relations with the media, schedule briefings, prepare releases, and (when required) arrange site tours. The PIO will also act as liaison between the Department and other City and outside agency Public Information Officers, and develop procedures for releasing information when outside agencies are involved in a mutual effort.

E. Information which must be made public*

* [*Unless release or disclosure of a particular item of information would endanger the safety of a person involved in an investigation or would endanger the successful completion of an investigation or a related investigation.*] **Government Code Section 6254(f)**

1. Arrestee Information
 - a. Except for minors, the full name, current address, and occupation of every person arrested by the Department.
 - b. The arrestee's physical description including: Date of birth, color of eyes and hair, sex, height, and weight.
 - c. Date and time of arrest.
 - d. Date and time of booking.

- e. Location of arrest.
 - f. Factual circumstances surrounding arrest.
 - g. Amount of bail set.
 - h. Time and manner of release or location where arrestee is being held.
 - i. All charges subject is being held on including outstanding warrants and probation/parole status.
2. Incident Information
- a. Time, substance, and location of all complaints or requests for assistance.
 - b. Time and nature of response thereto, including, to the extent that such information is recorded:
 - 1) Time, date, location of occurrence.
 - 2) Time and date of the report.
 - 3) Name, age, and current address of victim (except those of sex crime victims).
 - 4) The factual circumstances surrounding the crime or incident.
 - 5) General (non-specific) description of:
 - a) Any injuries involved
 - b) Weapons involved
 - c) Property involved

IV. REFERENCES

- A. [Departmental General Order M-9, RELEASE OF PUBLIC RECORDS](#)
- B. California Government Code § 6254(f), Public Records Act, Exemption of Particular Records
- C. California Penal Code § 409.5, Authority of peace officers, life guard or marine safety officer to close disaster area; exclusive from police command post area; unauthorized entry; exception.
- D. California Government Code § 54950 – 54960, “The Brown Act”
- E. Oakland Ordinance No. 11957 C.M.S., “The Sunshine Ordinance”
- F. Oakland Police Training Bulletin No. VIII-J, “News Media Relations”

By order of

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Chief of Police

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