



POLICY/PROCEDURE NUMBER: 05-S.O.-008

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SUBJECT: MEDIA RELATIONS

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 18, 2019

REVIEW DATE: December 18, 2020

AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: 100-23, RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO NEWS MEDIA, August 15, 2000; June 24, 2005 version; December 14, 2006 version; September 13, 2007 version; January 27, 2010 version; February 16, 2011 version; January 8, 2014 version; January 7, 2015 version

IACLEA STANDARDS: 12.3.4, 12.3.5

CSU POLICE SYSTEMWIDE POLICY – NO

APPROVED: Gregory L. Murphy, Chief of Police

I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for the timely release of information to the community and / or the media and delineate what information may be released.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized media representatives and assist them in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the Department and at the scenes of incidents. 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.

- A. The Special Assistant to the Chief of Police and Community Relations Officer (CRO) is the primary contact point for providing accurate information to the media. This individual also has formal responsibilities as the Department's Public Information Officer (PIO).
- B. 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 Chief of Police, the Chief's designee, or the Special Assistant to the Chief of Police and Community Relations Officer (CRO) as determined by the Chief of Police.

- C. The Associate VP for Marketing and Communications (University Advancement) 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. The Associate VP for Marketing and Communications will be advised of all off campus media concerns.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Public Information: Information that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures, statistics, incidents, or events involving the Department or other news-worthy 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.
- B. Authorized Media Representatives:
1. Those individuals who are directly employed by agencies of the electronic and print media such as radio, television and newspapers. These individuals will be in possession of press credentials issued by the Los Angeles Police Department, or other public safety agency, or the individual's employing agency.
 2. Other authorized media representatives include students who are assigned as reporters for a University/College newspaper, including but not limited to The Sundial. 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.
- C. Public Information Officer (PIO): Serves as a central source of information for release by the Department. The Public Information Officer also responds to requests for information by the media and the community. This is the responsibility shared by the Special Assistant to the Chief of Police and CRO, and the Associate VP for Marketing and Communications.
1. The Special Assistant to the Chief of Police and CRO shall serve as the Department's Public Information Officer and will have the responsibility for the release of information to media representatives about the operations of the Department. The Deputy Chief shall serve as the PIO in the absence of the Special Assistant to the Chief of Police and CRO. The Special Assistant shall:
 - a. Coordinate and authorize the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations.
 - b. Work with the Associate VP for Marketing and Communications and/or the university's Director of News and Information in the preparation and distribution of media releases.
 - c. Assist the news media in covering news stories at the scenes of incidents, crises, etc.
 - d. Assist the media with requests for information from agency files in accordance with the Public Records Act, as well as other information that is not readily available to the media.

- e. Work with the Associate VP for Marketing and Communications in coordinating and authorizing the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects, following the guidelines established in this order.
 - f. Keep the Chief of Police and the Associate VP for Marketing and Communications informed of any incidents that may attract media attention.
 - g. Consult with the Investigations Unit prior to the release of any information involving on-going investigations.
2. The Associate VP for Marketing and Communications will serve as the representative with responsibility for the release of information at major events affecting the University community. The Associate VP for Marketing and Communications will:
- a. Have responsibility for preparing and distributing news releases.
 - b. Have responsibility for coordinating and assisting at media conferences.
 - c. Be available for on-call responses to assist the Department in providing information to the news media and assist the news media in covering news stories at the scenes of incidents, crises, etc.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Release of Information:

- 1. Crime Log
 - a. Monday through Friday, except University holidays, the Records Supervisor will prepare a daily crime log for public release, which will contain all arrests, crimes reported to the police, updated dispositions, judicial referrals, online reports, housing fire log, and other items of interest to the media.
 - b. Information contained in the crime log is subject to the restrictions as stated in section IV (A)(5).
 - c. The Chief of Police shall approve all crime logs prior to public release. In the absence of the Chief of Police, the Deputy Chief, Captain or designated Lieutenant shall approve all crime logs. In the absence of all command staff members, a Detective Sergeant shall approve.
- 2. Telephone Inquiries
 - a. All telephone inquiries received from the media will be directed to the Special Assistant to the Chief of Police who is also the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Department.
 - b. In the absence of the Special Assistant, the Chief of Police will delegate inquiries to the Deputy Chief, Captain, a Lieutenant, or highest ranking supervisor on the watch.
 - c. Should a media call be received by dispatch, the dispatcher will obtain the caller's name and purpose of the call. The dispatcher will then call the PIO directly and transfer the call to her/him if instructed to do.

If the PIO is unavailable, the dispatcher is to then notify an available command staff member who will subsequently notify the Chief of Police. If a command staff member is not available, the dispatcher shall notify the Chief of Police directly.

3. The law requires that certain information must be disseminated. [California Government Code 6254(f)]:
 - a. Under the guidelines, information is releasable to:
 - 1) authorized representative of the victim;
 - 2) to an insurance carrier against which a claim has been made or may be made; and
 - 3) to any person suffering bodily injury or property damage as a result of an incident of arson, explosion, fire, vehicle theft, and/or larceny.
 - b. Suspects requesting copies of his/her arrest and/or crime report will be referred to a Detective Sergeant in the Investigations Unit.
 - c. Persons with a subpoena for records will be referred to a member of the Command Staff.
 - d. Information that is releasable under the above guidelines includes:
 - 1) 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);
 - 2) description of any property involved;
 - 3) date, time, and location of incident;
 - 4) statements of parties involved in the incident; and
 - 5) statements of all witnesses, except confidential informants.
 - e. Disclosure will not be made of that portion of the report that reflects the analysis or conclusion of the investigating officer.
 - f. No information will be released if such disclosure would endanger the successful completion of the investigation.
 - g. Any employee receiving a request for a copy of a police report will refer the person(s) making the request to the Records Unit. Person(s) requesting a police report must complete a "Release of Information" request form and pay a fee. Normally, it may take up to three working days to process the request.
4. The following information is considered public information and is releasable to any person:
 - a. Arrestee Information
 - 1) The full name, city of residence, and occupation of every adult person arrested by this Department.

- 2) The arrestee's physical description [date of birth, eye color, hair color, sex, weight, and height].
- 3) Date and time of arrest.
- 4) Date and time of booking.
- 5) Location of arrest.
- 6) Factual circumstances surrounding the arrest [not opinions or conclusions].
- 7) Amount of bail set.
- 8) Time and manner of release or location where the arrestee is being held.
- 9) All charges under which arrestee is being held, including outstanding warrants and probation and parole holds.

b. Incident Information

- 1) Time, substance, and location of all complaints or requests for assistance.
- 2) Time and nature of response, to include:
 - a) time, date, location of occurrence;
 - b) time and date of report; name, age, and city of residence of victim [exception: victim of sex crimes, medical-related incidents, and juveniles unless the victim is filing a claim with the State Board of Control per Government Code 13968(d)]; and
 - c) the factual circumstances surrounding the crime or incident.
- 3) The general description of:
 - a) any injuries confirmed;
 - b) any weapons involved; and
 - c) any property involved.

The above information is public information and shall be released to the public, except to the extent that disclosure 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.

Any time information is released to the media, the employee releasing the information will notify the Chief of Police, as soon as possible.

5. 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:
 - a. Prior to the arrest, do not release the identity of the suspect.
 - b. Prior to the arrest, do not release the details of the on-going investigation.
 - c. Release of information in items (a) and (b) may be made, if approved by the Chief of Police, in cases in which it will:

- 1) aid in the investigation;
 - 2) assist in the apprehension of the suspect; and/or
 - 3) warn the public of danger
- d. Prior criminal record, reputation, or character.
 - e. Identity or any personal information of a juvenile arrestee or suspect.
 - f. Existence or contents of any confession, or statements given by a suspect or the refusal to make a statement.
 - g. Any opinion about the possibility of a plea of guilty to offenses charged or a lesser offense or either disposition.
 - h. Performance of any examinations or tests or the suspect's refusal to, or failure to submit to an examination or test.
 - i. Any photographs or mug shots except if the release will:
 - 1) aid in the arrest of the suspect;
 - 2) aid in the investigation; and/or
 - 3) warn the public of danger.
 - j. The identity, testimony, or credibility of prospective witnesses.
 - k. Any personal opinion as to the suspect's guilt, innocence, or merits of the case.

The Chief of Police shall determine under what circumstances, and when, the names of officers involved in incidents shall be released.

6. In addition, employees shall not:
 - a. disclose the name of a deceased person (suspect/victim) until confirmation has been received that the next of kin have been notified.
 - b. 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.
7. In circumstances where there is an imminent need of an "on call" response to the media, the Shift Supervisor should notify, in order, the following:
 - a. Chief of Police and if necessary (dependent on issue and time factors according to the Chief of Police);
 - b. The Department of Police Services' Public Information Officer;
 - c. Captain, Patrol Operations;
 - d. The Associate VP for Marketing and Communications (University Advancement).
8. Release of information during mutual aid/joint enforcement efforts:

The Department of Police Services is sometimes involved in mutual aid and joint enforcement efforts with other public service agencies, e.g. Los Angeles Police Department, California Highway Patrol, Los Angeles School Police, Department of Motor Vehicles, etc.

- a. The agency having primary jurisdiction shall be responsible for releasing and coordinating the release of related information.
 - b. All public inquiries for the release of information pertaining to the Department's involvement in mutual efforts shall be referred to the Chief of Police or Department PIO.
 - c. The Associate VP for Marketing and Communications will be advised to refer media inquiries to the primary jurisdiction responsible for the mutual effort.
 - d. All requests for release of information during Critical Response Unit (CRU) missions will be directed to the *host* campus.
9. Press relations and media access (including photographers) to disaster, major fires, crime scenes, mass arrest operations, or other special or catastrophic events:
- a. 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 in accordance with 409.5 P.C.
 - b. 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 law enforcement or public safety response operations. Restrictions on media access will be imposed only for as long, and only to the extent necessary, to prevent actual interference.
 - c. 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.
 - d. Department employees shall not decline to protect 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.
 - e. Crime scenes may be closed to all unauthorized persons, including the media. Unlike a disaster scene, the media do not have a constitutional right to enter. 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 from being destroyed or contaminated.
 - f. News media representatives have no more right of access to private property than the general public. Therefore, 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.
 - g. The scene of a Department 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.

10. 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 and photographers. Arrests will only be made as a last resort and only in particular aggravated cases.
11. 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 Vehicle Code, provided that a press card is properly displayed in the front and rear windows of the vehicles. Specific locations where news gathering vehicles cannot 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.

B. CSU Major Incident Reporting Requirements:

The CSU mandates that notice is provided to the Office of the Chancellor of major incidents by campus presidents or their Chief of Police. A major incident is any incident involving the campus and its students, faculty or staff which may be newsworthy or potentially sensitive or there is a significant campus impact as determined by the Chief of Police or in her/his absence, her/his designee.

The Chief of Police will follow CSU protocol for major reporting requirements. In the absence of the Chief of Police, the Chief's designee in charge of the department will handle the incident reporting requirement or delegate same to the department's Public Information Officer.

C. Death Incidents:

Any employee receiving information from an external source concerning the death of a CSUN student (or member of the faculty or staff) shall immediately notify the Chief of Police or in her/his absence the Chief's designee. The Chief of Police or her/his designee will notify the office of the Vice President for Student Affairs and other appropriate administrators concerning student deaths. Refer to policy 06-C.I.-002, Victim and Witness Assistance.