

Tom Bean Police Department

Administrative Directive

Number: 102.020	Effective Date: 01/01/2021
Subject: Media Relations	Revision Date: N/A
Affected Personnel: All Personnel	Amends/Supersedes: N/A
Reference: N/A	

I. Purpose

The Department has established guidelines for the release and dissemination of agency information to the news media.

II. Policy

It is the policy of this agency that information be released in a factual and professional manner and in a way as not to jeopardize the integrity of an official investigation or infringe upon the rights of the individual. All information shall be released in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and within the guidelines of established procedures.

III. Public Information Officers

The Chief of Police above all others is considered as the "Primary Public Information Officer", but may designate / appoint other Public Information Officers to coordinate the affairs of media relations. Public Information Officers (PIO) will serve as liaisons between the Department and the mass news media to ensure that information regarding Department matters is properly disseminated.

A. Public Information Officers are responsible for:

1. Assisting members of the news media in covering routine news stories regarding police matters;
2. Responding to police scenes, which are of public concern, in order to gather pertinent information which will be released to news bureaus in a factual and timely manner;
3. Responding to police scenes which are of significant interest to the public, and to assist police and media personnel in gathering pertinent information for public release;
4. Preparing written news releases related to police incidents and agency activities that are of public interest, and to distribute those releases to the mass news media; including agency approved social media sites.
5. Arranging and coordinating department news conferences;

6. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information regarding victims, witnesses, suspects, arrestees and agency personnel to the news media in accordance with the TPIA and / or the FOIA.
7. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning confidential investigations and operations under the guidance of the Chief of Police;
8. Being familiar with all agency activities, functions, operations and programs;
9. Releasing agency information under the authority and direction of the Chief of Police.

IV. Persons authorized to release information

A. Public Information Officers are classified as follows:

1. Primary PIO - (Chief of Police)
2. Secondary PIO – (Patrol Sergeant)
3. Tertiary PIO – (Appointed by Chief of Police)

B. Public Information Officers are authorized to release agency information to the news media under the authority and direction of the Primary PIO and within the guidelines of this policy.

1. Any PIO may refer / defer specific media inquiries to the Primary PIO.
2. The Primary PIO or designee shall review and approve the release of any information concerning an active investigation prior to publication.
3. When assigned to an active police scene, police personnel shall refer all news media inquiries to the Primary or Secondary PIO.
4. The Police Records Coordinator is authorized to release information from department files on cases which are closed and are deemed to be a matter of public record.

V. Press Releases

- A. A press release shall be completed on all police incidents which are of significant interest to the public, the mass news media or when deemed appropriate by a PIO.
- B. All press releases shall be approved by the Primary PIO, prior to being released to the media.
- C. The subject matter of the press release shall include the time, date, location and nature of an incident. Information regarding the identity of those involved in an

incident shall be released within the guidelines set forth in section VIII. of this policy.

- D. The press releases shall be forwarded to all local news outlets as well as to the department sanctioned social media pages.

VI. News Media Credentials

- A. The department recognizes valid forms of identification issued to media representatives by their respective local, national and international accredited news agencies. Press privileges are extended to those news bureau representatives who carry and display proper identification issued by their agencies. Any questions concerning the validity of press credentials should be referred to a PIO.

VII. Media Access to Secured Police Scenes

- A. Official police lines are established to:
 - 1. Preserve the integrity of an area which is to be analyzed and processed during a criminal investigation;
 - 2. Secure areas which may pose a threat to public safety and/or involve significant resources on the part of emergency services (e.g. major fires, natural disasters, or other catastrophic events).
 - 3. The department extends certain privileges to members of the news media at secured police scenes so they may gather sufficient information regarding incidents of public interest.
 - 4. A "Media Staging Area" may be established in order to give media personnel a working view of the secured area, as well as convenient access to a PIO, or designee, without violating the integrity of the scene or hindering police operations.
 - 5. Officers do not have the legal authority to prevent the public or news media representatives from photographing or videotaping police operations or crime scenes from outside official police lines.
 - 6. The primary investigating officer of a police scene may take precautions to cover objects within the secure area which may not be appropriate for public view.

VIII. Release of Information to the News Media

- A. Unless prohibited in Section 2, the following information may be released:

1. The date, time, location and nature of a reported crime;
2. The name, sex, age, and address of a person charged with a crime;
3. The name, sex, age of the victim of a crime;
4. A photograph of an arrested person when cleared by the Primary PIO;
5. Department personnel may not prevent media representatives from photographing arrestees while in a public area however; arrestees shall not be paraded or posed for the media.

B. Information which may NOT be released unless cleared through a PIO:

1. The identity of any victim of a sexual battery, domestic violence, child abuse or neglect, stalking, aggravated battery or witness tampering or any information, which if divulged, might lead to the victim's identity, residence or place of employment;
2. The identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to family notification;
3. Specific causes of death prior to the Medical Examiner's evaluation and the approval of the Chief of Police;
4. Any information concerning the substance of a statement given to the police by the accused (e.g. refusal of statement, confession or admission);
5. The result of any examination or test of the accused;
6. The identity of a juvenile charged with a misdemeanor who has not been adjudicated as an adult; or a juvenile's criminal history;
7. Unauthorized release of information which is of an evidentiary nature regarding a criminal case;
8. Contents of a suicide note prior to case closure;
9. Personal opinions, such as, opinions regarding the guilt or innocence of the accused or merits of the case;
10. Information concerning the identity, testimony, or credibility of a prospective witness;
11. Information received from, or actions taken by, other law enforcement agencies without their concurrence for the release;
12. All personal identifying information to include: home addresses, telephone numbers, social security numbers and photographs of active or former agency personnel or their family members; nor their family member's places of employment;

13. Unauthorized comments concerning prior criminal record, character or reputation of an accused;
14. Reports, transcripts or summaries of proceedings from which the media and public were excluded by judicial order.
15. Information concerning the identity of a juvenile offender (name, photographs, and address) may be released if the child is arrested under an offense which, if committed by an adult, would be a felony; or if the child arrested has been found by a court to have committed three or more offenses which, if committed by an adult, would be misdemeanors

IX. Release of Information Involving Other Agencies

- A. When an investigation involves another law enforcement agency (local, state, or federal), the agency having primary jurisdiction and responsibility for said investigation shall coordinate the release of information.
- B. Whenever the police department and fire department have shared responsibility of an incident scene, the Police PIO and Fire PIO will coordinate their efforts to ensure that information is appropriately released.
- C. Whenever city administration and the police department have shared responsibility regarding incidents or situations involving city employees, the Police PIO and Mayor will coordinate their efforts to ensure that administrative and investigative information is appropriately released.

X. Media Access to the Department

- A. Representatives of accredited news media agencies entering the police department will be allowed access to specific areas of need by the PIO.
- B. Media personnel must display proper credentials while in any restricted area of the police department.
- C. While in restricted areas of the department, media personnel will complete their business under proper supervision and will return promptly to a public area of the department.
- D. Media photography within restricted areas is prohibited without prior authorization of the Primary PIO.

XI. Notifications

- A. A Public Information Officer shall, in an expeditious manner, be notified whenever the following incidents have occurred:

1. Incidents of a sensitive nature which may draw public attention to an agency employee or the Department;
 2. Incidents likely to attract significant ongoing media attention;
 3. Incidents involving serious officer injury;
 4. Incidents involving serious injury to a suspect or citizen due to police action or use of force;
- B. The primary responding officer at an incident scene shall determine who will be notified and shall verify that the appropriate notifications were made.