



WRITTEN DIRECTIVE	No. PD14-1502	Page: 1 of 5
Subject: MEDIA RELATIONS	Effective Date:	05-20-14
	Supersedes/ Amends:	PD11-1502
	Reference:	46.1.3, 54.1.1, 54.1.2. 54.1.3 55.1.3



I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines regarding the release of information by employees to the media.

II. Policy

It shall be the policy of the Lynchburg Police Department for employees to maintain a positive working relationship with members of the media so that the community will remain properly informed regarding events that involve this department.

III. Procedure

A. GENERAL

1. The Professional Standards Division Captain of the Lynchburg Police Department will be the primary person responsible for the public information function.

a. Additional Public Information Officers (PIO) may be assigned during times that the primary PIO may not be available.

2. Public Information Officers will have the following responsibilities:

54.1.1 A

a. assisting media personnel at incident scenes when requested by the incident commander.

54.1.1 B

b. being available for responses to the media

54.1.1 C

c. being knowledgeable of all department news releases provided to the media.

54.1.1 D, 55.1.3 B

d. arranging for and assisting at news conferences

54.1.1 E

e. arranging for and authorizing the release of information about witnesses, victims and suspects as allowed by law upon the request of the incident commander.

f. coordinating and releasing, as authorized by the Chief of Police, information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations

- g. assisting the Crime Analyst with the dissemination of crime analysis information in order to enhance public relations and generate community support.
- h. assisting media representatives with information requests by coordinating the contact between the media representative and the appropriate Lynchburg Police Department representative.
- i. ensuring the appropriate department personnel are made aware of all news and information requests from the media.

54.1.2

3. When a policy change concerning the media becomes necessary, the Public Information Officer will be responsible for:
 - a. contacting area media agencies and notifying them of the need for change
 - b. arranging a meeting if necessary between police officials and representatives of each media agency to discuss proposed changes.
4. The Public Information Officer may confer with the Public Information Office for the City of Lynchburg, Lynchburg Commonwealth Attorney's Office or the Lynchburg City Schools in special situations to coordinate specific information for a joint news release.

B. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

1. Any inquiries relating to department policy or procedural matters, internal investigations, or disciplinary matters shall be referred to the Chief of Police, who will either personally handle the response, or delegate the person to respond.
2. Information regarding criminal investigations may be released to the media only through a Public Information Officer (or his designee), or a police supervisor.
 - a. A Public Information Officer or police supervisor may facilitate an interview with the appropriate investigating officer.
3. The release of information by employees of this department will be in compliance with police department directive PD-1304 *Release of Records* and the Code of Virginia (1950) Title 2.1, Chapter 21: *Virginia Freedom of Information Act*, and Chapter 26: *Privacy Protection Act of 1976*.
4. Press releases will be prepared in a timely manner by the appropriate department representative involved in the incident or investigation as required or requested, and as frequently as deemed necessary to inform the public.
 - a. Press releases will be made available to all media recipients at the LPD Information Desk.

- b. Press releases will be electronically disseminated to the media by the department representative who creates the release. The PIO will assist as necessary.
 - c. Press releases will provide a general description of the incident in question.
 - d. No information will be disclosed which may jeopardize an investigation or infringe upon an individual's constitutional rights.
 - e. A copy of each press release will be forwarded to the Public Information Officer, both Deputy Chiefs, and the ECC Director.
 - f. Press releases will be saved to a location on the LPD Server that allows all employees access to the documents.
5. Information that may be released to members of the media will include:
- a. a general description of the circumstances surrounding a newsworthy event
 - b. identity, description, and certain other information regarding adults who have been formally charged with a crime
 - c. identity, description, and certain other information regarding juveniles who have been formally charged and are being tried as adults.
6. Booking photographs (mugshots) of suspects are deemed to be part of the criminal history file and as such may only be released upon the discretion of the Criminal Investigations Division Captain or designee and will only be provided without police identification number. Personnel responsible for the *Central Virginia Crime Stoppers* program and *Manhunt* program may release booking photographs of suspects as part of those programs.
7. Certain information regarding police investigations shall not be released to the media, including:
- a. the prior criminal record, character, or reputation of the accused
 - b. the existence of any confession, admission of guilt, or statement given by the accused, or the failure/refusal by the accused to give such a statement
 - c. any information which negatively affects an individual's constitutional rights and/or either prejudices or hinders an investigation
 - d. the results of any examination or test, or the refusal of the accused to submit to any such examination or test
 - e. the identity, testimony, or credibility of any prospective witness

- f. any opinion of department employees regarding the merits of a case, and/or guilt or innocence of the accused or the quality of evidence gathered
 - g. any information concerning juveniles not being tried as adults
 - 1) This does not include the name of a juvenile who has been involved in a traffic accident (VA Code 46.2-379) for which no charges have been filed or are pending against the juvenile.
 - 2) The name of an injured juvenile, however, should not be released to the media until after a reasonable effort has been made by the investigating officer to notify the appropriate family member(s) as directed in PD-2017 (*Emergency Notifications*).
 - h. information received from another law enforcement agency, without that agency's authorization to release it
 - i. other information related to a police investigation not authorized for release.
8. It will be the responsibility of the Public Information Officer to furnish media agencies with contact information to facilitate the necessary communication in order to maintain a positive working relationship with members of the media.
- a. The on-duty division supervisor will normally be available for interview during their tour of duty.
 - b. The Narcotics/Vice Unit Lieutenant works various hours and will receive messages left on the unit telephone answering machine.
- 54.1.1 F
9. Whenever the department is involved in a mutual effort with other agencies, the Public Information Officer will:
- a. provide information concerning investigations which are the primary responsibility of this department, or
 - b. refer inquiries to the agency primarily responsible for the investigation.

46.1.3 F, 54.1.3

C. SPECIAL SITUATIONS

- 1. In the event of a natural or technological disaster, hostage negotiation, civil disturbance or other special situation:
 - a. in those instances where the police department is in charge of the total incident, the incident commander may specify an area to be used for briefing the media
 - b. all members of the media will be directed to the designated briefing area

46.1.3 F, 54.1.3

- c. a Public Information Officer will be assigned by the incident commander to assist the media when deemed necessary.
- 2. A Public Information Officer should give regular briefings to the press and provide assistance in helping the media obtain video coverage or pictures as is reasonable under the circumstances.
 - a. Only authorized personnel will be allowed access to any area, which has been cordoned off as a crime scene.
 - b. Members of the media will be allowed access to the scene of a major incident under the provisions specified in the Code of Virginia, Section 15.2-1714.

Parks H. Snead
Chief of Police

May 20, 2014

Date