



KANSAS CITY, MO. POLICE DEPARTMENT

**PROCEDURAL INSTRUCTION**

DATE OF ISSUE

08-23-06

EFFECTIVE DATE

08-22-06

NO.

06-9

SUBJECT

Media Contact and Interactions

AMENDS

REFERENCE

Missouri Revised Statute 610.100

RESCINDS

Procedural Instructions 02-5

## I. PURPOSE

To establish procedures for contact and interaction with the media and the release of information.

## II. ADMINISTRATIVE GUIDELINES

- A. Significant incidents (e.g., Operation 100, civil disorder, fire, explosion, plane crash, etc.) will be brought to the attention of the Communications Unit supervisor without delay by the ranking officer at the scene. Communications will notify the Media Unit and briefings for the media may be provided.
- B. Media members with proper identification from a media affiliation will be allowed access to designated areas.
- C. Media members will be denied access to areas other than the assembly point location when, in the judgment of the ranking police officer, their personal safety would be threatened or their presence would interfere with the police operation.
- D. Inquiries regarding internal investigations of department personnel will be referred to the Media Unit.

## III. PROCEDURE

### A. NOTIFICATION AND RESPONSE

- 1. Communications Unit - When notified of a major incident, the Communications Unit supervisor will:
  - a. Ascertain, from the ranking officer, a site for assembly of media personnel.
  - b. Notify the Media Unit, Patrol Bureau Commander, and the Duty Officer.

2. Media Unit - When a Media Unit member responds to the assembly site of an incident, they will ascertain areas of access for the media from the ranking officer at the scene.
- \* 3. Media Unit Commander or their designee will make notifications to the news media by best means available (e-mail, voice mail, etc) giving a detailed account of the event.
- \* 4. Division/Bureau Commander - The Media Unit will be notified by the division/bureau commander or designee of any event/operation within their command that has the potential of attracting media attention.
- \* 5. Department Members - Any member contacted by the media for interviews in non-emergency situations should notify the Media Unit, preferably prior to the interview. If circumstances require that the interview be conducted prior to notifying the Media Unit, the department member should make notification as soon as possible following the interview. When Media Unit members are not available for notification, a message will be sent by e-mail.

## **B. ACCESS TO POLICE FACILITIES AND POLICE PERIMETERS**

1. Media Access at Police Facilities
  - a. General Areas of Access
    - (1) The media will be allowed access to all general areas open to the public.
    - (2) The police headquarters basement garage area (except during large operations when detention facilities must be expanded to include the garage area).
    - (3) Designated area set-aside for briefing the media.
    - (4) Areas where the media are provided guided access by a department member.
  - b. Access to Investigations Bureau Facilities
    - \* (1) Representatives of the media, will be accompanied by Bureau Personnel or a member of the Media Unit at all times within Investigations Bureau facilities.
    - \* (2) Media representatives and other non-department personnel will not be allowed access to computers, electronic devices, files, file drawers, report baskets, or other non-public department information or sources. It is

the escorting member's responsibility to secure such information and sources to ensure that it is not accessible by such individuals.

- (3) When necessary, elements will establish controls in their own facilities limiting access to a central control point, which can be monitored or secured.

## 2. Media Access to Police Perimeters

- a. Department members will secure crime scenes and access will not be permitted within the inner limits of the secured area unless approved by the ranking investigating officer.
- b. Media coverage will be permitted adjacent to any barriers and any other areas accessible to the general public.
- c. To the extent possible, without hampering police operations or investigations, the media will be furnished access to information and to safe locations from which to take photographs or recordings. This location will be, in most cases, the designated staging area. Identification of media personnel may be verified by requesting media credentials issued by the media affiliate.
- d. When mobile television, radio transmitting units, or vans arrive at a police perimeter, the news media will be directed to the media assembly point (on foot) to determine the location for their mobile units. Once the personnel assigned to the command post have designated the site, assistance will be provided by department members to advance the mobile units.
- e. A Media Unit member may give the news media guided access to scenes, when approved by the ranking officer in charge except in the following instances:
  - (1) When the crime scene is on private property and the owner of the property requests that the news media not be given access.
  - (2) When the presence of the news media might adversely affect the preservation of evidence at the scene or interfere with the investigation.
  - (3) When, in the judgment of the ranking investigative officer/division commander or the Media Unit member, the news media members would be endangered.

## C. RELEASE OF INFORMATION TO THE MEDIA

1. The fire department is in charge at the scene of any fire and should make all media releases until such time as the fire becomes a crime scene. If the fire scene becomes a crime scene, policies relative to crime scenes will be in effect.
- \* 2. A supervisor will be consulted prior to the release of information not specified in this directive. If a member is uncomfortable addressing the media, he/she should refer the media to a supervisor. The supervisor will be responsible for briefing the media in the event personnel from the Media Unit will not be responding.
3. Information Which May Be Released - When requested by news media members at the scene of an incident, any department member having factual, firsthand knowledge of the situation **may** verbally provide the following information:
  - a. Type of call received and time dispatched.
  - b. Known facts and circumstances relating to the commission of a crime which will not hinder or prejudice the investigation.
  - c. General description of any suspect(s).
  - d. Facts and circumstances of arrest, including the time and place of arrest, resistance by the suspect(s), any pursuit, or the use of any weapons, (generic description only, i.e. knife, handgun).
  - e. The race, sex, age, occupation, and family status of the suspect(s).
  - f. A suspect may be identified by name in the following circumstances:
    - (1) In cases involving state or federal prosecution, the suspect must be arrested (**in physical custody**) before the identity may be released. In situations where the suspect has been charged, but is not yet in custody (i.e., state warrant), the appropriate investigative element will be contacted, prior to the release of any information.
    - (2) In cases involving a violation of a municipal ordinance, the suspect's identity may be released once a summons (UTT or GOS) has been issued. When the arresting officer has submitted a city pick-up to the city prosecutor's office, persons making inquiries will be referred to the Media Unit.

- (3) In cases when a large public interest exists or when public safety is an issue, the suspect's name may be released with the approval of the investigative sergeant at the scene.
  - g. Number, sex, and age of victim(s).
  - h. Nature of victim's injuries.
    - (1) Nature of injuries, weapons used, or cause of death **will not** be released in homicide cases, unless approved through the ranking investigating officer.
    - (2) In the event the victim(s) is transported to a hospital, the hospital's name **will not** be released.
  - i. The identity of any deceased victim(s) will be released only after their relatives have been notified, or upon the approval of a ranking investigative officer.
  - j. The identity of the investigating and/or arresting officers may be released at the discretion of their commander, if such information does not jeopardize or compromise personnel assigned to undercover operations.
4. Information pertaining to the following **will not** be released:
- a. Detailed descriptions of suspects or evidence, which may jeopardize the successful conclusion of an investigation.
  - b. Prior criminal record notations of arrests or other criminal charges, which did not result in a final conviction.
  - c. If a suspect has not been apprehended, the member associated with the investigation may release only that information necessary to aid in the apprehension or to advise the public of the potential danger of the fugitive.
  - d. The existence or content of any confession, admission, or statement given by individuals, or the refusal or failure of individuals to make any statement, to perform any examination, or to submit to any test.
  - e. Personal opinions about the suspect such as guilt or innocence, mental status, anticipated plea, or value of evidence against the accused.
  - f. The identity, testimony, or credibility of prospective witnesses.

- g. The identity of any victim, without prior permission from the victim, or the victim's family if applicable.
- 5. Requests for information regarding any investigation, not released at the scene of a crime, maybe directed to the Media Unit for follow-up.
- \* 6. Release of information from Report and Computer Records

The Media Unit will provide or decline to provide police reports, personnel files, mug shots, or other records based on Missouri law or current Department policy. Requests by the media, for any information from reports and computer records, will be directed through the Media Unit. If the request is made after normal business hours, the on-call Media Unit representative will be contacted.

7. Photographs, Video Recordings, and Interviews

- a. Videotaping, photographing and audio recordings will not be allowed during any department approved ride-along without the approval of the Media Unit Commander and the appropriate Division Commander.
- \* b. Videotaping, photographing and audio recordings by the media of any law enforcement activity, which occurs in private areas, will be prohibited.
- c. Photographs and videotapes may be taken from areas where media personnel or the public have been given access. Officers should, however, restrict the use of flash, strobes, or high intensity lights when the use of such equipment would hinder a police operation, endanger officers or citizens by exposing them to unnecessary risk, or create a hazard (e.g., cause an explosion in a gaseous atmosphere).
- \* d. The taking of photographs of suspects or of witnesses by the media will not be permitted in working areas of any department facility which would normally be non-accessible to the general public.

- \* 8. Requests from media representatives will be handled by the Media Unit in accordance with Missouri Sunshine Law.

James D. Corwin  
Chief of Police

Adopted by the Board of Police Commissioners this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2006.

Karl Zobrist  
Acting President

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