

General Order 251.00

Reviewed: 12/14

251.00 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

251.01 The Department's Public Information Function:

- The department's public information function will include the following activities:
 - Assisting news personnel in covering routine news stories, and at the scenes of incidents;
 - Being available for on-call responses to the news media;
 - Arranging for and assisting at news conferences;
 - Preparing and distributing agency news releases;
 - Coordinating and authorizing the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects;
 - Assisting in crisis situations within the agency;
 - Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations; and
 - Developing procedures for releasing information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort.
- The Public Information Officer (PIO), a collateral duty of the Professional Standards Sergeant, will be responsible for the public information function of the department. He will coordinate the dissemination of information to the community, to the media and to other criminal justice agencies.
- The Public Information Officer will:
 - Serve as the central source of information for release by the department and respond to informational requests by the news media and the community;
 - Arrange press conferences, as required;
 - Write formal press releases and distribute them;

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- Arrange interviews between departmental members and the press at the request of the news media;
- Assume a proactive role in contacting the media with information that might not otherwise come to their attention; and
- Respond to the scenes of major crimes, catastrophes, special events and unusual occurrences, and coordinate the release of information.

251.02 Public Information Release Authorities:

- As a general guideline, all requests by the media will be directed to the Public Information Officer. The PIO will then coordinate any release with the designated release authorities specified below. If the PIO is unavailable the recipient of a media request will route the request to one of the designated release authorities, if the recipient of the request is the appropriate release authority, they he/she may issue the press release. All information released to the news media by departmental personnel will be reported to the Public Information Officer as soon as practical.
- Statistical, crime rate, budgetary, departmental planning, or departmental policy information may be obtained through the Office of the Chief of Police or through his designated representative during normal business hours. Any release pertaining to the preceding topics will require the approval of the Chief of Police prior to issuance.
- Information requests occurring during normal business hours pertaining to recruitment, training, personnel programs, or criminal investigations or any other activity within the realm of the Support Services Division, unless otherwise specified in this directive, will be routed to the Support Services Division Commander.
- Information requests occurring during normal business hours pertaining to records or computer services, unless otherwise specified in this directive, will be routed to the Support Services Division Commander. Information requests occurring during normal business hours pertaining to operational activities such as patrol, special operations, traffic, or any other activity within the realm of the Operations Division, unless otherwise specified in this directive, will be routed to the Operations Division Commander.
- Information requests pertaining to patrol section activities after normal business hours will be routed to the on-duty Watch Commander.
- Information requests pertaining to on-going criminal investigations will be directed to the Investigations Section Commander or the Task Force Commander.

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- Information requests directed towards information stored in the department's files and not otherwise addressed in this directive may be released within established guidelines by the Records Section Supervisor.
- At the scene of any police operation at which the Public Information Officer is unavailable, the ranking police official on scene may release information or may designate a departmental spokesperson to act as the PIO.
- If the PIO is present at the scene of a police operation, he will establish a press area and handle all media releases. He will coordinate his activities with and under the command of the ranking police official on scene. If specific media requests are directed at statements from the command authority on scene, he will coordinate such interviews as long as it does not interfere with departmental operations.
- The PIO will be notified to respond to coordinate press releases for major police events which attract a news media presence. Included in these types of activities are: barricaded gunmen, hostage situations, homicide investigations, large scale narcotics or organized crime raids, special events, catastrophes, and unusual occurrences.

251.03 Procedures for Press Releases:

- Frequency: There will be no regularly scheduled press releases or conferences conducted by the Department. During on-going police activities centered on some major event, daily and weekly press releases or conferences may be necessary. The police command authority with input from the PIO will determine the schedule of releases in this circumstance. Generally, press releases or conferences will be singular and tied to some specific event. Information will be released as necessary concerning specific incidents within the department's jurisdiction. Routinely, a synopsis of police reports for the preceding 24-hour period will be provided to the media.
- Media Recipients: Authorized press releases will be provided to all requesting bonafide members of the media. Generally, the press release will be prepared in bulletin form. The PIO or other releasing departmental member will ensure that first-release information and departmentally initiated releases are equally available to all news media. The person releasing the information will notify the local news media of the time and place of the planned news conference. The releasing authority may make a telephonic notification of the media, as long as all local media known to the department is contacted.
- Subject Matter:

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- Copies of police reports will be made available to members of the news media in accordance with the Records Section procedures and federal and state statutes governing release. During normal business hours, questions will be referred to the appropriate releasing authority.
- Specific information that may be released during an on-going criminal investigation:
 - Release of information pertaining to victims, witnesses and suspects will adhere to the following procedures, including the following information:
 - Prior to arrest – Information released
 - ◆ A description of the exact offense including a brief summary of events;
 - ◆ A location and time of offense;
 - ◆ Type of property loss, injuries sustained, or damages resulting from the action;
 - ◆ Identity of the victim, except for a victim of a sexual offense or death, a situation resulting in a death where the next of kin have not been notified by the Coroner, or juveniles;
 - ◆ The presence of suspects;
 - ◆ Information about unidentified suspects, such as physical description, vehicle description, when the information will not hinder an investigation;
 - ◆ Identification of fugitive suspects for whom a warrant has been issued;
 - ◆ Method of complaint (citizen, warrant); and
 - ◆ Length of investigation and name of officer in charge of the investigation.
 - Prior to arrest – Information not released
 - ◆ Identity of suspects who are interviewed but not charged;
 - ◆ Identity of witnesses, including a victim who can positively identify an assailant;
 - ◆ Identity of victim of sexual offense;
 - ◆ Identity of juveniles when restricted by state law;
 - ◆ Exact information about the weapon or other physical evidence;
 - ◆ Any information that could be known only by the guilty party;
 - ◆ Information about valuable items not stolen;
 - ◆ Conjecture about suspects or fugitives; and
 - ◆ Misleading or false information.
 - After arrest – Information released

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- ◆ Time and place of arrest;
 - ◆ Defendant's name, age, residence, employment, marital status, and similar background information;
 - ◆ The exact charge;
 - ◆ Facts and circumstances relating to the arrest, such as resistance, pursuit, use of a weapon, description of contraband discovered;
 - ◆ Identity of the agency or unit responsible for the arrest;
 - ◆ The name of the arresting officer, unless there are unusual circumstances where it is felt the officer would be jeopardized;
 - ◆ Duration of the investigation;
 - ◆ Pre-trial release or detention arrangements including amount of bond, location of detention; and
 - ◆ Scheduled dates for various steps in the judicial process, usually obtained through the District Attorney's Office.
- After arrest – Information not released
- ◆ Comments about the character or reputation of the defendant;
 - ◆ Information about the existence or content of a confession, admission or statement by the accused;
 - ◆ The refusal of the accused to make a statement;
 - ◆ The refusal of the accused to submit to tests or examinations;
 - ◆ Results of any exam or tests;
 - ◆ Description or results of laboratory examination of physical evidence;
 - ◆ Re-enactment of the crime;
 - ◆ Revelation that the defendant directed investigator to the location of a weapon, contraband, or other evidence;
 - ◆ Any remarks about the assumed guilt or innocence of the defendant;
 - ◆ Comments about the credibility of testimony; and
 - ◆ If the information for the arrest was derived from an informant.
- Any information released as specified in the preceding section of this directive, GO 251.05(C) will be reported to the PIO as soon as possible.
 - Reviewing supervisors routing and approving all original police reports are responsible for the content and information in reports forwarded to the media computer terminal for release. If any information in a police report should not be released to the media, as specified in the preceding section of this directive, the reviewing supervisor will contact on-duty Records personnel as specified in General Order 251.08 to ensure that the restricted information is not placed on the media computer terminal.

251.04 Access of the News Media Including Photographers:

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- Photographs:
 - Personnel of the Department will not give photographs of or allow interviews with persons in custody, to the news media without first consulting the prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction over the matter. Officers may not prevent photographs of persons in custody while in public places, nor may officers prevent brief comments by persons in custody to reporters while in public places, however, officers are not required to impede their movement of the prisoner to allow media access. If the media desires access to the prisoner, this should be arranged through the appropriate channels.
 - The news media shall not be allowed to photograph persons in custody within restricted areas of the departmental buildings, off limits to the public at large.
- Crime Scenes:
 - The news media shall not be allowed access to private property in custody of the Department unless granted permission by the property owner, his representative or other person in charge of the property and the access has been approved by the on-scene supervisor.
 - The news media shall not be allowed access to any area where there is a possibility that evidence may be damaged, altered or destroyed. Once the evidence has been photographed, processed, removed or secured by authorized departmental personnel, the media may be allowed to enter the area.
- Scenes of major fires, natural disasters, other catastrophic event, barricaded gunmen, or hostage situations:
 - News media access to operational areas may be restricted at scenes of major fires, natural disasters, other catastrophic event, barricaded gunmen, or hostage situations. The news media access may be restricted under the following conditions:
 - The news media will not be allowed access to any area where such access would obviously disrupt police operations or tactical deployment. Nor will the media be allowed access to an area where the presence of the media would jeopardize the life of, or present substantial possibility of injury to, any departmental member or citizen other than the member of the news media.

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- The news media should not be prevented from having access to an area solely because of the possibility of injury or death to himself. It that is the only consideration, the media member should be advised of the danger, then allowed to make the decision to enter on his own volition.
- Any time the news media is denied access to an area or to information, he will be given a courteous explanation of the reason for the denial.
- Press access in Police Department facilities:
 - During normal business hours, media representatives will proceed to the Records Section where a media computer terminal will be provided. Records personnel will provide the press terminal to the requesting member of the press as quickly as possible, as they are often under deadline constraints. If the media member needs additional information, he/she should be referred to the appropriate release authority, refer section 251.04 of this directive. If the appropriate releasing authority is unavailable, route the media representative to the on-duty Watch Commander. The designated releasing authority will assist the media, when possible. When the media representative is in restricted (non-public) areas of the building, they will be under escort.
 - After normal business hours, media representatives who need to contact someone at the Police Department will contact Communications via the direct telephone in the lobby. Communications will notify the on-duty Watch Commander.

251.05 Release of Information during Combined Operations with Other Agencies:

- Whenever an agency other than the Greeley Police Department, such as UCFRA, Colorado Bureau of Investigation, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Evans Police Department, etc., initiates an activity within the city of Greeley, regardless of the level of Greeley Police Department assistance, that outside agency will be responsible for releasing information about its activity to the news media.
- In any situation where multiple agencies are involved in a police action, all agencies will be consulted to plan for the release of information to the media.
- In any death investigation conducted by the Department, the Coroner and the District Attorney, the primary responsibility of releasing information to the media lies with the Department concerning departmental activities. By state statute, the Coroner has jurisdiction in such investigations. The Coroner will release information regarding the death investigation. The Police

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Department will coordinate any release involving a death investigation with the Coroner's Office and will release only information pertaining to the Department's involvement in the investigation or information authorized by the Coroner concerning the death.

251.06 Media Reports:

- On a daily basis during late shift, the Records Section will provide a list of original police reports approved during the previous 24-hour period. The resulting media list will be transmitted (FAX) to the late shift Watch Commander for review.
- Upon receipt of the media list, the Watch Commander will review the listed reports, and determine which of the listed reports are appropriate for release to the media within the criteria for this directive. After reviewing the media list, the Watch Commander will contact the on-duty Records personnel and notify them of any current reports which should be withheld from the media terminal.
- The media list for all current reports approved during the previous twenty-four hours will then be listed on the "current day" media terminal. This listing will include the case number, incident type, and reporting officer's name and badge number for each original report.
- When current reports are withheld from the media terminal, Records personnel will place the notation "see PIO" next to the incident on the media list. This will refer the media to the PIO for additional information.
- These reports shall be made available for review to all members of the media at no cost. Requests by the general public to view the media terminal will be referred to the Records Section Supervisor.
- Prior to releasing copies of current primary officer reports on the media terminal, Records personnel will edit out the following information:
 - Juvenile Reports: Juvenile arrest/suspect information including identifying information such as address, must be blacked out on the copy of the report (traffic is excluded).
 - Rape and Sex Offense Reports: The victim's name and any other identifying information, including address, telephone number, etc. shall be blacked out on the media copy of the report. The location of occurrence will also be withheld if the crime occurred at the residence of the victim.

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- Incest, Child Abuse and Neglect Reports: The victim and suspect information including any identifying information shall be blacked out on the media copy of the report. Both victim and suspect information is withheld as the identity of the suspect could divulge the identity of the victim. If the crime occurred at the residence of the victim, the location of occurrence will be blacked out on the media copy of the report.
- Officer Involved Shooting Incidents: Crime reports generated from an officer involved shooting incident will not be placed on the media board. All media releases will be handled through the Public Information Officer, refer 251.10(B).
- Homicide Reports: No homicide reports will be posted on the terminal board. All media releases will be handled through the PIO.
- Requested Do Not Publish: in the instance that a victim requests that a police report not be released to the media or published, the following procedures will be adhered to:
 - The reviewing supervisor will advise Records personnel that the reporting party is requesting that the report not be published at the time the initial report is routed and approved.
 - When the police department withholds a police report, the following procedures will be adhered to:
 - The reviewing supervisor will notify Records personnel when submitting the report not to post it on the media terminal.
 - Records will place the notation "See PIO" next to the incident on the media list for the withheld report. The report will not be released on the media terminal.
 - The reviewing supervisor will notify the Public Information Officer of the report withheld from the media terminal. The reviewing supervisor will advise the PIO of the facts requiring the report to be withheld, the case report number, and general information to assist in the preparation of a press release.
- Supplement Reports: No supplement of any report will be released on the media terminal.
- Media viewing of initial reports: Initial reports released to the media terminal will be available for viewing by media members at no charge. Records personnel will require photo identification from media reporters requesting media terminal access, if the reporter is unknown to Records personnel. Requests to view reports no longer posted on the media terminal should be referred to the Watch Commander after normal

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business hours, the Records Supervisor, or the appropriate releasing authority established by this directive.

- Media Questions: Questions from the media directed at Records or Communications personnel concerning the specifics of an incident will be referred to the PIO or the on-duty Watch Commander or other appropriate releasing authority as established in this directive dependent on the nature of the incident. Records personnel may confirm the basic information that the media is unsure of, for example: the spelling of names or dates of birth, when the media is unable to verify that information from their notes.

251.07 Departmental Policy-Procedures and Media Involvement: The news media will be involved in the development of changes in departmental policies and procedures relating to the news media. The PIO will meet with members of the news media to obtain their input. The PIO and/or Support Services Division Commander will meet with representatives of the news media approximately once a year to develop or review existing new policies or procedures, to plan specific situations such as natural disasters, catastrophes, etc.

251.08 The Sworn Officer and the News Media:

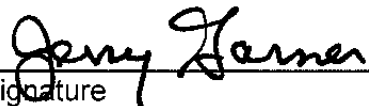
- Although there is a PIO, individual officers will be frequently asked to supply information related to their law enforcement function. When approached by a member of the media with a question concerning police operations, the officer should first refer the media representative to the appropriate release authority. If the media questioning concerns activities in which the officer is directly involved, he must decide if he has the authority to answer, is qualified to answer, if his answer is not proscribed by directive, and if the media representative is the proper person to receive the information.
- Generally, officers should be open in their dealings with the media and supply the requested information when appropriate. However, if the officer is uncomfortable in this role, he is not required to answer the media's questions. In such cases, the officer should refer the request to the appropriate release authority. Officers shall avoid representing their opinion as fact. The officer should consult with their appropriate commander (Watch Commander, Investigations Commander, Task Force Commander) prior to providing press comments. If this is not practical, the officer will notify the appropriate commander after the comment.
- While any police employee is authorized to speak with a member of the news media, he or she is responsible for the accuracy of the information released, the propriety of releasing it, and advising his/her supervisor of the release.

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251.09 Civilian Employees and the News Media: it is imperative that information released by employees of this agency does not injure the privacy of individuals, hamper or damage a criminal investigation, or violate the law. Additionally, a fee schedule setting copy cost, and release of information and data fees has been established in ordinance for this agency. Employees shall be aware of the sensitive nature of the information they possess as police department employees and defer release of any sensitive information to the PIO or the appropriate releasing authority.

251.10 Rules:

- An officer releasing information to the media or who becomes engaged in a conflict with a media representative will notify his supervisor as soon as practical. The PIO and the Chief of Police will be notified of the incident via the chain of command.
- In the situation of an officer involved shooting, the name of the officer involved will not be released.

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