

GREELEY POLICE DEPARTMENT

General Order 251.00

Reviewed: 03/23

251.00 PUBLIC INFORMATION AND NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

- 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) will be responsible for the public information function of the department. The PIO 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
 - Arrange interviews between departmental members and the press at the request of the news media

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- 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 may issue the press release. Information released to the news media by departmental personnel will be reported to the Public Information Officer as soon as practical.
- Statistical data, crime rate, budgetary information, departmental planning, media story requests, 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 Deputy Chief.
- 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 Deputy Chief. 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 Deputy Chief.
- 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 Manager.
- 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 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 if it does not interfere with departmental operations.
- The PIO will be notified to respond to coordinate press releases for major police events that 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 these circumstances. Generally, press releases or conferences will be singular and tied to a 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 credentialed 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 a planned news conference. The releasing authority may make a telephone notification to the media, including all local media known to the department.

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- Subject Matter:
 - Copies of police reports will be made available to members of the news media in accordance with the Records Section report release 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, etc.); 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;

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- ◆ Misleading or false information.
- ◆ Any information regarding mental health holds or detox holds;
- After arrest – Information released
 - ◆ 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, are usually obtained through the District Attorney's Office and that information should come from that 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; or if the information for the arrest was derived from an informant.
 - ◆ Any information about mental health holds or detox holds;
- Any information released as specified in the preceding section of this directive, will be reported to the PIO as soon as possible.

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251.04 Access of the News Media Including Photographers:

- 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 with the PIO.
- 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 that media representative. If that is the only consideration, the media member should be advised of the danger, then allowed to make the decision to enter of their own volition.
- Any time the news media is denied access to an area or to information, they will be given a courteous explanation of the reason for the denial.
- Press access in Police Department facilities:
 - 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 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 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 and will release information regarding the death investigation. The Police 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 Questions:

- Media Questions: Questions from the media directed at Records, concerning the specifics of an incident will be referred to the PIO, 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.

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251.07 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, the officer should refer the representative to a supervisor or the PIO.
- 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, they are 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.

251.08 Civilian Employees and the News Media: It is imperative that information released by employees of this agency not injure the privacy of individuals, hamper or damage a criminal investigation, or violate the law. Copies of the information may be released in accordance with established policies, statutes, and fees through the Records Section of the Department. 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.

251.09 Rules:

- An officer releasing information to the media or who becomes engaged in a conflict with a media representative will notify their supervisor as soon as practical. The PIO and the Chief of Police will be notified of the incident via the chain of command.

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Authorized by Adam Turk, Police Chief

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Adam Turk

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Signature