



University of Pennsylvania Police Department 4040 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pa 19104		 
Directive: 34	Subject: Public Information	Effective Date: 02/17/2000
Order of: Gary Williams, Chief of Police		Amended Date: 08/01/2023

I. Purpose

It is the purpose of this directive to establish guidelines for release and dissemination of public information to print and broadcast media.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the University of Pennsylvania Police Department (UPPD) to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the UPPD, as long as these activities do not unduly interfere with departmental operation, infringe upon individual rights or violate the law.

III. Scope

This directive shall affect all sworn police officers.

IV. Definitions

- A. News Media Representatives: Those individuals who are directly employed by agencies of the electronic or print media such as radio, television and newspapers. Freelance workers in this field are to be regarded as other members of the general public unless otherwise designated by the Chief of Police.
- B. Public Information: Information that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures or events involving the UPPD or other newsworthy information that is not legally protected, does not unduly interfere with the mission of the UPPD, infringe upon the rights of a defendant or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of officers, victims, witnesses or others.
- C. Public Information Officer (PIO): The UPPD's PIO serves as a central source of information for release by the UPPD and responds to requests for information by the news media and the University community.

V. Procedures

A. Authorization to Release Information

1. The Vice President for Public Safety (or designee) is the primary PIO for the Division of Public Safety.
2. The Chief of Police (PIO), or designee, shall be the primary contact for dissemination of UPPD information to the University community and media.
3. The Chief of Police (PIO), or designee, shall consult with the Office of the Vice President for Public Safety and the Office of University Communications concerning the release of information of a sensitive or highly charged nature.
4. Inquiries concerning UPPD policy and procedures, or practices, will be referred to the Chief of Police (PIO), or designee.
 - a. The PIO will coordinate all responses to inquiries or release of information in conjunction with the Office of the Vice President for Public Safety. The Vice President for Public Safety and the Chief of Police will determine the need for and timing of press releases and will release material to all news media in a fair and equitable manner generally through the Office of University Communications.
5. Only the Vice President for Public Safety or Chief of Police or designee may release:
 - a. answers to questions of enforcement policy;
 - b. information regarding disciplinary actions against members of the UPPD;
 - c. organizational changes;
 - d. policy statements;
 - e. annual reports;
 - f. photographs of UPPD members;
 - g. offender photographs; or
 - h. statistical data relating to crime.
6. At the direction of the Vice President for Public Safety, the Deputy Chief of Investigations or designee on duty may release information to news media representatives regarding crimes under investigation by members of the Detective Unit in accordance with the restrictions set forth in this directive.

B. Duties of the PIO

1. The UPPD's PIO will, at the direction of the Vice President for Public Safety, or designee:
 - a. assist news personnel in covering news stories at the scenes of incidents. Other members of the department may be permitted to speak to the news media but may do so only after receiving the authorization of the PIO.
 - b. assist the news media on an on-call basis;
 - c. assist the Office of the Vice President for Public Safety and the Office of University Communications in the preparation and distribution UPPD news releases;
 - d. assist the Office of the Vice President for Public Safety Office and the Office of University Communications in arranging and holding news conferences;
 - e. coordinate and authorize the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects;
 - f. assist in crisis situations within the UPPD;
 - g. coordinate and authorize the release of information concerning confidential UPPD investigations and operations; and
 - h. develop procedures for releasing information when other public service agencies (e.g., Philadelphia Police Department, Philadelphia Fire Department, Medical Examiner's Office, and other outside agencies) are involved in a mutual effort.

C. Cooperation with the News Media

1. Authorized news media representatives shall have reasonable access to the Chief of Police (PIO), or designee and operations of the UPPD as governed by this directive. When information must be denied to a media representative, the basis for that denial shall be fully and courteously explained.
2. The UPPD recognizes authorized identification from all local, national and international news organizations. Failure of media personnel to present authorized identification may provide grounds for restricting access to restricted information or to incident scenes.
3. Public information shall be released to the media as promptly as circumstances allow, without partiality and in as objective a manner as possible.
4. Public information may be provided to media representatives by telephone if the identity of the representative is known or can be authenticated.
5. If the Chief of Police (PIO) is not available, all media inquiries shall be referred to the office of the Vice President for Public Safety.

6. Written press statements shall be released by the Chief of Police (PIO), or designee, or by the Office of University Communications, at the direction of the Chief of Police.
7. The PennComm Center Police Supervisor shall inform the Shift Commander/Supervisor as soon as possible upon receipt of information about events or activities that may have media interest.
8. The Shift Commander/Supervisor shall be responsible for ensuring that the Chief of Police is informed of events that may have media interest.

D. Involving the News Media in UPPD Policies and Procedures

1. If a UPPD policy or procedural change develops concerning the news media, representatives from the various media will be encouraged to participate in the development of the policy or procedure.

E. Investigative Information

1. From the initial stage of a criminal investigation until the completion of trial or disposition without trial, police personnel shall refer all requests for information to the Chief of Police, or designee.
 - a. Information that **may be released** in connection with an investigation of an event or crime includes:
 - 1) the type or nature of an event or crime;
 - 2) the location, date and time, injuries sustained, damages and a general description of how the incident occurred;
 - 3) type and quantity of property taken;
 - 4) requests for aid in locating evidence, a complainant or a suspect; and
 - 5) name of the officer in charge of a case, his/her supervisor and division or unit assignment. (**Exception:** The name of any undercover officer will not be released.)
 - b. Information that **may not be released** in connection with an investigation of an event or crime, unless authorized by the Chief of Police or PIO, include:
 - 1) the identity of a suspect prior to arrest unless such information would aid in apprehending the suspect or serve to warn the public of potential danger;
 - 2) the identity or address of any victim or witness;
 - 3) the identity of any juvenile who is a suspect or defendant in a case subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court;

- 4) the identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to notification of next of kin;
 - 5) the results of any investigative procedure such as lineups polygraph tests, fingerprint comparison, or other procedures;
 - 6) information which, if prematurely released, may interfere with the investigation or apprehension such as the nature of leads, specifics of an "MO," details of the crime known only to the perpetrator and the police, or information that may cause the suspect to flee or more effectively avoid apprehension;
 - 7) information that may be of evidentiary value in criminal proceedings;
 - 8) specific cause of death (always referred to the Medical Examiner); and
 - 9) medical condition of a victim or suspect (always referred to hospital's Public Affairs Officer).
- c. In addition to subsection b., above, UPPD personnel shall **not**:
- 1) pose a prisoner for photographs at or near the scene of a crime or which connects him/her with the scene of a crime;
 - 2) allow prisoners to be photographed while inside any police facilities by anyone other than police personnel for official police records;
 - 3) request the press to hold back or not publish information given to them;
 - 4) intentionally misinform any member of the news media;
 - 5) release the home address or telephone number (including pager and cell phone) of any UPPD employee;
 - 6) allow prisoners in police custody to be interviewed by members of the news media;
or
 - 7) allow members of the news media to ride in police vehicles unless prior approval is granted by the Chief of Police.

F. Arrest Information

1. Following arrest, it is permissible for the Chief of Police (PIO) to release:
 - a. the accused's name, age, residence, occupation, and family status;
 - b. the time and place of arrest, whether pursuit or resistance was encountered, whether weapons were used, charges placed against the suspect;

- c. the amount of bond, scheduled court dates and place of the suspect's detention.
2. Following arrest and formal charging of a suspect, but prior to adjudication, the following types of information shall **not** be released without the expressed permission of the Chief of Police:
 - a. prior criminal conviction record, character, or reputation of a defendant;
 - b. existence or contents of any confession, admission or statement of a defendant, or his/her failure or unwillingness to make a statement;
 - c. performance or results of any tests, or a defendant's refusal or failure to submit to tests such as a polygraph;
 - d. identity, statement or expected testimony of any witness or victim;
 - e. any opinion about the guilt or innocence of a defendant or the merits of the case;
 - f. any opinion or knowledge of the potential for a plea bargain or other pretrial action; or
 - g. any inflammatory or sensational statements going beyond an objective statement of the facts of the crime.

G. Special Considerations - Criminal Matters

1. UPPD personnel shall extend every reasonable courtesy to news media representatives at crime scenes. In general, members of the news media and their vehicles are permitted free movement around the PERIMETER of crime scenes provided their vehicles are parked in a legal manner and do not interfere with police/fire actions or functions. Vehicle access to and from the area will be maintained at all times.
2. Members of the news media are to be kept only as far away from the crime scene as to ensure that the scene is not disturbed or evidence destroyed and to protect them from personal injury.
3. At the scene of major crimes (e.g., hostage and barricade situations, homicides, bomb emergencies, etc.) where the incident involves municipal, state, or federal agencies and the UPPD does NOT have primary jurisdiction and is assisting another agency, responsibility for the release of information to the news media shall rest with the agency having primary jurisdiction.
 - a. The UPPD on-scene commander shall refer all requests for information from news media representatives to the agency having primary jurisdiction.
4. The UPPD on-scene commander shall ensure a preliminary press area has been designated as early as possible and as close to the scene as safety and operational requirements allow.

H. Special Considerations - Noncriminal Matters

1. At the scene of significant accidents, major fires, natural disasters, or other catastrophic events, the principles of media cooperation shall be maintained to the degree that they do not interfere with the mission of the police, fire, medical or other emergency relief workers.
2. News media access to and movement within fire lines shall be controlled by the Philadelphia Fire Department's (PFD) on-scene commander, in conjunction with the Division of Public Safety's Fire and Emergency Services (FES) on-scene commander. In consultation with the PFD and FES on-scene commanders, the ranking UPPD police officer at the scene shall establish an observation point from which the news media representatives, including photographers, may observe and photograph the incident.
 - a. At the discretion of the on-scene commander of the agency having primary jurisdiction, an inner perimeter may be established for the media from which to record the event.

I. Access to Daily Reports

1. Daily administrative reports of criminal activity will be made available on a routine basis to news media representatives and members of the University community by way of the UPPD Crime Log. (See **Directive 47, "UPPD Crime Log"**).
2. News media representatives shall be denied access to the contents of investigative or incident reports and records where release of the information would:
 - a. interfere with law enforcement proceedings;
 - b. deprive a person the right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, or give one party to a controversy an undue advantage by exclusive access to such information;
 - c. constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy rights of another person;
 - d. reveal the identity of an individual who has furnished information to the UPPD under confidential circumstances;
 - e. disclose investigative techniques and procedures, thereby impairing future effectiveness of the UPPD; or
 - f. endanger the life or physical safety of any person.

J. Compliance

Violations of this directive, or portions thereof, may result in disciplinary action.

K. Officers Assigned to Other Agencies

Officers of this department assigned to or assisting other law enforcement agencies will be guided by this directive.

L. Application

This directive constitutes departmental policy, and is not intended to enlarge the employer's or employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It shall not be construed as the creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims insofar as the employer's or employee's legal duty as imposed by law. Violations of policy will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.