

132. RELEASE OF PUBLIC SAFETY INFORMATION TO THE MEDIA



RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

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NOTE: This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to establish guidelines for the release of public safety information to the media.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to govern what information is to be released, when it should be released, and by whom information is to be released. This is to be done with as much openness and candor as is practical and in accordance with the Minnesota Data Practices Act. In order to maintain a relationship of mutual trust, cooperation, and respect, this Department is committed to providing information to the public and media that is within the public domain.

III. PROCEDURE

PUBLIC INFORMATION FUNCTION

The potential for situations in which the news media is interested in Department operations is always present. There will be situations that this Department will wish to generate media interest. To this end and within legal standards, the Department should:

- Assist news personnel in covering routine news stories and incident scenes.
- The Police Chief or designee should be available for on-call media responses.
- Prepare and distribute news releases on a timely basis.

1) Position Responsible for Public Information

The Police Chief or his designee should act as the Public Information Officer (P.I.O.) for this Department and should coordinate the release of media information. The media should be apprised that inquiries for information are directed to the Police Chief. If the Police Chief is absent, his designee during this absence is responsible for media releases.

2) Who May Release Media Information

Department members who release information to the news media or public may release only that information which is legally permissible. At an incident scene, the duty supervisor should be responsible for release of response data only as defined in Minnesota Data Privacy Act-Minn. Stat. 13.82. The Administrative Lieutenant should be responsible for information release from Department files. Persons requesting information from Department files should be referred to the Administrative Lieutenant. Information concerning ongoing criminal investigations should be released by the Police Chief or his designee. All information should be released consistent with Minnesota Data Practices statutes.

Employees of the Richfield Police Department, unless specifically designated in this Policy, **shall not** release any Department information including information on any police operation(s) or administrative operation(s) to the news media or to the public.

Any interview requests of Public Safety personnel should be approved by a member of the command staff.

ACCESS OF NEWS MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES

This Department should put forth a sincere effort in fostering good media relations. News media representatives should not be allowed to interfere with law enforcement operations at any incident scene. Incidents are defined as, but not limited to; major fires, natural disasters, motor vehicle accidents, crime scenes, or other catastrophic events. If, in an officer's judgment, the crime scene or safety of any person is jeopardized, the officer should respectfully order appropriate displacement of media personnel.

1) Media Access to Policies

Any news media organization and/or representative are entitled to a copy of this Policy.

2) Release of Ongoing Criminal Investigation Information

The release of information regarding ongoing criminal investigations should be done only by the Police Chief or his designee. Department members are strictly prohibited from releasing:


- a) The prior criminal record, character, or reputation of the accused.
- b) Mug shots of the accused.
- c) Existence of any confession, admission of guilt, or statement made by the accused or the failure or refusal by the accused to make a statement.
- d) The results of any examination or tests conducted or refusal by the accused to submit to any examinations or tests.
- e) The identity, testimony, or credibility of any prospective witness.
- f) Any opinion of department personnel regarding the guilt or innocence of the accused.
- g) Any personal opinion regarding the merits of the case or quality of evidence gathered.
- h) Personal information identifying the victim.
- i) Information identifying juveniles.
- j) Information received from other law enforcement agencies without their concurrence to release that information.

If any information regarding an ongoing criminal investigation is released to the news media, the Police Chief should be notified as soon as possible.

3) Mutually Involved Agency Information

When other agencies are mutually involved with an incident, the agency with primary jurisdiction should be responsible for coordinating the release of information.

By Order Of:



Chief of Police

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