

RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge this department's, governmental entities and/or any of this department's employees' civil or criminal liability in any way. It is not to be construed as the creation of a specific standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to any complaint, demand for settlement, or any other form of grievance or litigation. Violations of this directive, if substantiated, can only form the basis for intra-departmental administrative sanctions.

Chief of Police: Jason Soto /s/		
Approving Deputy Chief: Tom Robinson /s/		
General Order No: S-180-17	Issued: January 3, 2006	Revised: April 19, 2017
General Order Title: MEDIA RELATIONS		

Positive news media relations are vital to the Department's law enforcement responsibilities. Law enforcement agencies depend on community support, trust, and confidence. The news media is an effective way for the Department to communicate its priorities and accomplishments to the public, and to achieve its vision of being a totally integrated into the Community and viewed as a model of policing excellence.

It is the policy of the Department to make every effort to keep the news media informed. The Department will inform the community, through the news media, and social media of pertinent law enforcement-related events or activities occurring in the City of Reno unless the release of information will jeopardize an individual's rights, impair prosecution, or hinder law enforcement efforts.

DEFINITIONS

News Media Representative – (hereinafter referred to as news media) Those individuals employed as reporters or photographers by and with identification from a local, national, or international news organizations whose primary purpose is the gathering and dissemination of news to the public through print, electronic or web-based mediums.

Incident Briefing – A brief, written account of a relatively minor police-involved incident that is disseminated to the news media for public information.

News Release – A written, detailed account of a police-involved incident that is disseminated to the news media for public information.

Media Group –Departmentally recognized local, national or international news media organizations, PIOs, the City's Office of Communication and Community Engagement and the City Manager's Office, that receive the Department's incident briefings and news releases.

Public Information Officer (PIO) – A designated Public Information Officer (hereinafter referred to as PIO) from within the Department or in the Community Relations Division of the City Manager's Office assigned to the Department, with training in crisis communications and the development and dissemination of information to news media organizations.

POLICY

City Policy regarding Media Communications and Release of Public Information:

Nothing in this General Order is meant to override or supersede the City's Media Communications and Release of Public Information Policy No. 201. As always, employees are expected to adhere to both the Department's G.O. and the City's Policy.

Media Access on Scene:

It is the policy of the Department to work with the news media on an equal basis regardless of the respective medium, and to extend every courtesy to members of the news media. These courtesies will include permitting closer access than that granted to the public. When the Department's Public Information Officer (PIO) is present, areas of access will be coordinated through the PIO, otherwise they will be determined by the supervisor or incident commander in charge of the scene. When there is danger of personal injury, access will be restricted until the supervisor or incident commander in charge of the scene determines that the area is safe. At times, media outlets may obtain film, video, audio or other digital recordings which may assist in an investigation. Should Reno Police Department (RPD) staff have a good faith belief that a recording will be useful in an investigation, RPD staff may ask the media representative to voluntarily provide a copy of the recording. If the media representative declines such a request, RPD Command staff can seek to obtain a copy of the recording via a properly issued warrant.

Officers Seriously Injured or Killed in the Line of Duty:

Whenever an officer is seriously injured or killed during the course of their duties, it is the policy of the Department to withhold information pertaining to the identification or condition of that officer for a minimum of 24 hours to allow for preliminary investigation and not until notification of the next of kin.

Public Information and Public Records Requests:

Public information and records will be made available to the news media during regular business hours and may be subject to established policy regarding copying charges, confidentiality, and privilege. Public record requests may be written or oral, and should be made to RPD Records. Questions regarding the availability of records for public inspection shall be referred to the City Attorney's Office. Inquiries regarding personnel issues, procedures, or policies, workforce demographics, employment statistics, or similar matters shall be referred to the Human Resources Department who will consult with the City Attorney's Office before any public release of information. All inquiries regarding individual privacy, pending litigation and other specific matters shall be referred to the City Attorney's Office. The City Attorney's Office will work with the Office of the Chief and the PIO to determine the appropriate method for responding to these inquiries.

Release of information:

It is the policy of the Department that investigative information may only be released by the Reno Police Department when the Department has primary jurisdiction and responsibility of the investigation or the incident. In cases where other law enforcement agencies have jurisdiction (such as those involving bank robbery, kidnapping, interstate flight to avoid prosecution, or other federally-controlled investigations, or cases involving RPD being investigated by other agencies) the agency having jurisdiction or leading the investigation will determine the guidelines and control the release of information. The FBI has concurrent investigative jurisdiction in matters relating to federally-insured financial institutions and savings and loan associations and normally control release of information related to cases involved those institutions.

Department Complaints about Media:

Complaints initiated by Department personnel involving news media personnel and or activities will be forwarded up the chain of command. In cases of serious abuse of access/privilege granted under this General Order, the Office of the Chief of Police may refer the complaint for investigation depending on the nature of the allegation. If the Chief of Police makes a decision to revoke the Department's recognition of an individual employee or associate of a news agency, a letter will be sent to the individual's employer or sponsor citing the specific violation and informing the agency of the action to be taken.

PROCEDURES**Responsibilities:**

The PIO, in conjunction with the Department's executive staff, will be responsible for maintaining effective relationships between the Reno Police Department and news media representatives. PIO responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- Assisting news media in covering news stories including their activities at the scene of accidents;
- Being available for on-call responses to incidents and requests from the news media;
- Preparation and distribution of Department incident updates and/or news releases;
- Arranging for and assisting at news conferences including establishing conference areas when applicable and notifying the news media of their location;
- Coordinating and authorizing the release of information about incidents, victims, witnesses, and suspects, as well as proactive crime prevention information;
- Assisting with crisis communications;
- Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning Department investigations, operations, and incidents; and coordinating release of information pertaining to interagency cooperative effort.
- Managing, monitoring and updating Department social media outlets and their content.
- Working with all sections/divisions within the Department to communicate positive community engagement and interaction.

Release of Information:

Release of information by Department personnel will be in accordance with this general order.

Requests for information from news media representatives for assistance in the development of stories will be handled in an orderly and expeditious manner.

Written incident briefs and news releases will be developed by lieutenants, sergeants, and PIOs utilizing the approved format (see attached).

A written incident brief (generally shorter and less detailed than a news release) may be developed for relatively minor incidents of general interest.

A written news release, which is generally more extensive/detailed than an incident brief, will be developed as soon as possible when an event occurs that constitutes a city-wide crisis/emergency incident and/or has the potential to draw the interest of the news media and public. Examples include, but are not limited to, multiple-vehicle traffic accidents resulting in street restrictions/closures, vehicle/pedestrian accidents involving serious injury or fatality, homicide, major graffiti incidents, hostage situations, SWAT deployments, significant arrests, major narcotics seizures or stolen property recovery, officer-involved shooting, significant department achievements or activities, proactive crime prevention, etc.

The release of information for most incidents may be handled by the lieutenant or sergeant, either through a written incident brief, written news release, or by telephone interview. When an event occurs that constitutes a city-wide crisis/emergency incident and/or has the potential of drawing the interest of the news media and public, as noted above, the supervisor/incident commander at the scene will brief the PIO as soon as possible, and or may request the assistance of the PIO at the scene of the incident, or a PIO may be assigned by the Chief of the Department, to work with the news media in covering the event. This will facilitate coordinated release of information and alleviate pressure on the supervisor/incident commander and other personnel whose primary duties are investigation/mitigation of the incident.

Release of information at the scene of an incident will be coordinated through the supervisor or incident commander at the scene. Knowledgeable PIOs, supervisors/incident commanders and officers on the scene of an incident are authorized to respond to questions from the news media, to the extent that the questions do not relate to sensitive or confidential matters.

PIOs, incident commanders and other key staff as previously noted are responsible for maintaining communications between each other on major incidents and news media contacts to provide each other with consistent up-to-date incident information in the event of multiple news media requests.

The Office of the Chief of Police will be advised, through the chain of command, of incidents of a sensitive nature that may bring public attention to an officer and/or to the Department. Media requests regarding internal issues will be coordinated through the Chief of Police.

Questions on specific incidents, investigations, programs or projects will be referred to the concerned division commander for information releases.

Due to the sensitive nature of on-going investigations, supervisors from each involved Division, Section, Unit or other Department resource will review and approve the release of information concerning a specific investigation.

Written news releases and incident briefs will be sent out via e-mail and posted on the Department's News Release website.

News releases and incident briefs will be sent to PDEVERYONE via e-mail. Personnel assigned to maintaining the Department's website will post the news release or incident brief to the City's website and the Department's News Release webpage.

Information concerning victims, witnesses, and suspects may be released to the media in accordance with NRS 179A, NRS 432B, other statutory confidentiality provisions, and the Records Section's operating procedures.

The PIO will provide an updated phone contact list for area sergeants and PIOs to the news Media each January, and will update and distribute the list as needed during the remainder of the calendar year.