

 ROCKFORD POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER - NUMBER 1.16 -		DISTRIBUTION ALL PERSONNEL	PAGE 1 OF 6
ORDER TITLE NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS	SERIES NO. 1	SERIES TITLE / SUBJECT LAW ENFORCEMENT ROLE, RESPONSIBILITY AND RELATIONSHIP	
TOPICS / REFERENCE Information Requests, News Media on Scene, Press Conference, Press Release, Public Release of Information,		APPENDICES NONE	
EFFECTIVE / ORIGINAL ISSUE DATE July 15, 1977	REVISION/ REISSUE DATE May 16, 2011	EXPIRATION DATE This order remains in effect until revised or rescinded	
CALEA (5th Edition Standards) 54.1.1 • 54.1.2 • 54.1.3			

POLICY

It is the policy of the Rockford Police Department to extend full cooperation to members of the news media and the community fostering an atmosphere of openness, trust and mutual respect. Information shall be released to the news media in an impartial, accurate and timely fashion.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish procedures and guidelines for members of this Department when dealing with the news media.

These guidelines are not meant to be all-inclusive, since each incident must be dealt with on an individual basis, but are intended as broad guidelines to assist the employees and supervisors involved.

This Order is comprised of the following numbered sections:

- I. DEFINITIONS**
- II. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY**
- III. PROCEDURES**
- IV. PROHIBITED ACTS**
- V. INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES**
- VI. PRESS CONFERENCES**
- VII. NEWS MEDIA REVIEW**
- VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE**
- IX. REVIEWS, REVISIONS AND CANCELLATIONS**

I. DEFINITIONS

- A. News Media:** Refers to the section of the mass media that focuses on presenting current news to the public. These include print media, broadcast media and internet-based media.
- B. News Conference:** An announced, pre-arranged meeting with news media for the purpose of releasing written and/or oral information and responding to questions.

- C. **Written Media Release:** A prepared statement that is released to the news media at a news conference or is made available to the media at the Public Safety Building.
- D. **Major Incident:** Forcible felonies, allegations of misconduct by Department employees, death or serious injury to a police officer, use of force incidents, catastrophic events, hostage or barricaded subject, deaths involving juveniles, bomb threats or explosions, riots, and mass arrests.

II. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITY

- A. The Chief of Police, or his designee, shall respond to media inquiries regarding major incidents.
- B. On-duty Commanders and Supervisors may respond to media inquiries to non-major incidents and may conduct informal interviews with the media at the scene of non-major incidents following the guidelines of this general order.
- C. Patrol Officers and Investigators are prohibited from initiating any contact either written or orally regarding any official Department matter with the news media without prior approval from the Chief of Police or their Bureau Deputy Chief. Officers at the scene of an incident, who are approached by a member of the news media, shall refer all questions to the on scene supervisor, or in the absence of a supervisor, to their immediate supervisor or the Shift Commander.

III. PROCEDURES

- A. All information released to the media shall be released in accordance with this General Order and applicable State and Federal statutes pertaining to Freedom of Information.
- B. The Department shall maintain a 'Media Arrest Log' link on the Rockford Police Department official web site on the Internet. This web site shall contain all approved arrests of individuals age 17 and over made in the last seven days. Displayed will be specific information about the arrestee, as well as incident information such as case number, arrest date and time, location and the charge(s). Written media releases shall also be placed on the web site for dissemination.
 - 1. The Chief of Police, Deputy Chiefs or their designee have the ability to suppress arrest information for 72 hours on the following cases:
 - a. Sensitive cases,
 - b. Cases requiring addition investigation
 - c. Case involving arrest for any narcotic activity
 - 2. Arrest information needing to be permanently suppressed must be approved by the Chief of Police or a Deputy Chief.
- C. Commanders and Supervisors will assist all news media personnel, to the extent possible, without interfering with an investigation.

- D.** At incident scenes, it may be necessary to establish perimeters and control access. Any such limitations should be clearly explained to the news media personnel. News media personnel shall not be in a position to interfere with law enforcement operations. Depending on the situation, media personnel may be allowed access. Normally, a specific area for media access and meeting will be established in order to provide a cooperative and accurate flow of information concerning the incident. Officers may not grant news media personnel access to private property. Where possible, news media personnel should be restricted to public property.
- E.** In a multi-jurisdictional investigation, the lead investigative agency is responsible for providing or coordinating the release of public information.
- F.** The Department may deny access to the scene of an incident or its files to any news media representative who:
 - 1. Interferes in an investigation while at the scene of an ongoing incident;
 - 2. Interferes with the effective operation of the Department or any of its members;
 - 3. Obtains or publishes restricted information;
 - 4. Violates established media relations procedures.

IV. PROHIBITED ACTS

- A.** No member of the Department will release any information to the news media that concerns the following:
 - 1. A prior criminal record of an individual that has been arrested or anything that pertains to the character or reputation of the accused,
 - 2. Any investigation being conducted by the Office of Professional Standards whether the investigation is on going or not. Any inquiries from any source relating to internal investigations or crisis situations within the Department will be referred to the Chief of Police or the Office of Professional Standards Commander,
 - 3. The identity, potential testimony or credibility of any potential witness,
 - 4. Any opinion as to the accused's guilt, innocence or merits of the case.
- B.** The deliberate posing of a person in custody for photographing or televising by members of the media is expressly prohibited.
- C.** The release of information of any individual that has been killed in an accident or other incident prior to the notification of the next of kin is prohibited.
- D.** The name and/or address of any victim of a sex crime will not be released to the media unless the victim has died as a result of the crime and then only with the approval of the Chief of Police.
- E.** The identity of juveniles arrested will not be released. Records concerning juvenile offenders will not be open to public inspection or released to the media, unless there is a valid court order. A minor who is a victim of any offense shall have the same confidentiality.

V. INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES

- A.** Media releases are to be prepared by the Chief of Police, Deputy Chiefs of Police or their designees.
- B.** The following information may generally be released unless otherwise restricted by Court Order, Case Law, the Freedom of Information Act or by direction of a supervisor:
1. The type or nature of an incident,
 2. Specific information about the incident related to:
 - a. The location of an incident,
 - b. Date and time of an incident,
 - c. Injuries sustained,
 - d. Damages, and;
 - e. A brief description of what happened.
 3. The facts and circumstances of an adult arrest including:
 - a. Name(s) of arrested,
 - b. Time and place of arrest,
 - c. Address of arrested,
 - d. Age of arrested,
 - e. Charge(s), and;
 - f. If available, attaching photographs of arrested suspects.
 4. The facts and circumstances of a juvenile arrest including:
 - a. Time and place of arrest,
 - b. Address of arrested,
 - c. Age of arrested, and;
 - d. Charge(s).
 - e. Name(s) of juveniles and photograph(s) arrested are **never** released. (*705 ILCS 405/5-901*)
 5. The identity of the victim, except for sex crimes and juveniles.
 - a. If death or serious injury is involved, the identity of the victim should be withheld pending notification of next of kin.
- C.** The following information should not be released:
1. Any information regarding confidential Department investigations and/or operations,
 - a. Confidential information may only be released with the authorization of the Chief of Police.

2. Any information that could jeopardize an ongoing investigation,
3. Names, addresses and any other information that would identify the victim of a sex crime, child abuse or other crime where the privacy of the victim is protected by law,
4. Names, addresses, and basic information about juveniles as governed by the laws of the State of Illinois (*705 ILCS 405/5-901*).
5. Active criminal investigation information, active criminal intelligence information and surveillance techniques,
6. Grand jury testimony or proceedings,
7. Names of witnesses,
8. Any information concerning an investigation or alleged investigation by the Office of Professional Standards,
9. Names of suspects who were not charged with an offense,
10. No opinion shall be given as to the guilt or innocence of any defendant or suspect,
11. The existence or contents of any purported confession, admission or statements given by a defendant or suspect or their refusal or failure to make such a statement, and;
12. Any other information prohibited by State law or Department rules and regulations.

D. Media Releases are distributed in the following manner:

1. Updated electronic Media Distribution lists are maintained with each Bureau.
2. In general, Media Releases are electronically sent to the news desks of surrounding news outlets.
3. Media Releases are available for pick up from the Public Safety Building.
4. All Media Releases are posted on the City of Rockford Police Department web page.

VI. PRESS CONFERENCES

- A.** Formal press conferences shall be conducted at the Public Safety Building or other areas as determined by the Chief of Police or his designee.
- B.** The Chief of Police or his designee shall be the official spokesperson at all press conferences.

VII. NEWS MEDIA REVIEW

- A. News media representatives are encouraged to participate in the process of developing procedures relating to news dissemination and to make recommendations to improve existing policy.
- B. The Deputy Chief of the Administrative Services Bureau will contact news media representatives and advise them of any proposed significant changes to this policy and provide an opportunity for input.

VIII. EFFECTIVE DATE

- A. This policy became effective July 15, 1977.

IX. REVIEWS, REVISIONS AND CANCELLATIONS

- A. This General Order will be reviewed each **May** by the **Accreditation Section** and, when necessary, revised or cancelled in accordance with the procedures for reviewing written directives established in General Order *10.01 – Written Directives*.
- B. This order is a revision of and supercedes General Order *A9 – News Media Relations*, issued July 15, 1977 and Memorandum *2008-039 – Electronic Arrest Log* issued July 10, 2008
- C. Any employee with suggestions for revisions and/or improvements to this order are encouraged to submit their ideas to the **Deputy Chief of the Administrative Services Bureau**.

BY ORDER OF

Chet Epperson
Chief of Police