

Media Relations

323.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the release of official department information to the media. It also addresses coordinating media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies, and other law enforcement activities.

323.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the San Diego Community College District PD to protect the privacy rights of individuals, while releasing non-confidential information to the media regarding topics of public concern. Information that has the potential to negatively affect investigations will not be released.

323.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the District PIO and Chief of Police or authorized designee. In situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief of Police and in situations where the Chief of Police has given prior approval, a Regional Lieutenant or authorized designee (and/or District PIO) may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable laws regarding confidentiality.

323.4 MEDIA REQUESTS

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement incident shall be referred to the PIO, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor. Prior to releasing any information to the media, members shall consider the following:

- (a) At no time shall any member of this department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from the Chief of Police, authorized designee or District PIO.
- (b) In situations involving multiple agencies or government departments, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to the release of any information by this department.
- (c) Under no circumstance should any member of this department make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police, authorized designee or District PIO. Under these circumstances the member should direct the media to the agency handling the incident.

323.5 ACCESS

Authorized media representatives shall be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies, and other law enforcement activities as required by law.

Access by the media is subject to the following conditions (Penal Code § 409.5(d)):

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- (a) The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public. Media representatives may not bring or facilitate the transport of an unauthorized person into a closed area unless it is for the safety of the person.
- (b) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
 - 1. Based upon available resources, reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the PIO or other designated spokesperson.
- (c) No member of this department who is under investigation shall be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved member (Government Code § 3303(e)).
- (d) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody should not be permitted without the approval of the Chief of Police and the express consent of the person in custody.

323.5.1 CRITICAL OPERATIONS

A critical incident or tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the media should not be permitted within the inner perimeter of the incident. Department members shall not jeopardize a critical incident or tactical operation in order to accommodate the media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through the Chief of Police, authorized designee or District PIO.

323.5.2 TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or member safety or significantly hamper incident operations, the incident commander should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the communications center. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident and should be requested through the appropriate control tower. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should be contacted (14 CFR 91.137).

323.6 CONFIDENTIAL OR RESTRICTED INFORMATION

It shall be the responsibility of the District PIO, as well as all police personnel, to ensure that confidential or restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media (see the Records Maintenance and Release and Personnel Records policies). When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be consulted prior to releasing any information.

323.6.1 EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

The identities of officers involved in shootings or other critical incidents may only be released to the media upon the consent of the involved officer or upon a formal request filed.

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Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in the information log (see the Information Log section in this policy), including the identity of officers involved in shootings or other critical incidents, shall be referred to the Chief of Police, authorized designee or District PIO.

Requests should be reviewed and fulfilled by the Custodian of Records, or the authorized designee. Such requests will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Records Maintenance and Release Policy and public records laws.

323.7 RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The Department may routinely release information to the media without receiving a specific request. This may include media releases regarding critical incidents, information of public concern (including emergency notifications and timely warning notifications), updates regarding significant incidents, or requests for public assistance in solving crimes or identifying suspects. This information may also be released through the department website or other electronic data sources.

323.7.1 INFORMATION LOG

The Department will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities. Log entries shall only contain information that is deemed public information and not restricted or confidential by this policy or applicable law. Upon request, the log entries shall be made available to media representatives through the Patrol Sergeant.

The daily information log will generally include:

- (a) The date, time, location, case number, type of crime, extent of injury or loss, and names of individuals involved in crimes occurring within this jurisdiction, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation, or the information is confidential (e.g., juveniles or certain victims).
- (b) The date, time, location, case number, name, birth date, and charges for each person arrested by this department, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation or the information is confidential (e.g., juveniles).
- (c) The time and location of other significant law enforcement activities or requests for service with a brief summary of the incident.

At no time shall identifying information pertaining to a juvenile arrestee (13 years of age and under), victim, or witness be publicly released without prior approval of a competent court. The identity of a minor 14 years of age or older shall not be publicly disclosed unless the minor has been arrested for a serious felony and the release of such information has been approved by the Chief of Police, authorized designee or District PIO. (Welfare and Institutions Code § 827.5).

Identifying information concerning deceased individuals shall not be released to the media until notification of next of kin or otherwise cleared through the Medical Examiner or the investigating agency.

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Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in this log shall be referred to the designated department media representative, the custodian of records, or if unavailable, to the Patrol Sergeant. Such requests will generally be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Public Records Act (see the Records Maintenance and Release Policy).