

	KENOSHA POLICE DEPARTMENT			
	POLICY AND PROCEDURE			
	54.1 Police Media Relations			
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I. PURPOSE

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

II. POLICY

It is the policy of this law enforcement agency to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the department, as long as these activities do not interfere with departmental operation, infringe upon individual rights or violate the law.

III. DEFINITIONS

Public Information: Information that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures or events involving the department or other newsworthy information that is not legally protected, does not unduly interfere with the mission of the department, infringe upon the rights of a defendant or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of officers, victims, witnesses or others.

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.

Public Information Officer (PIO): The department's PIO serves as a central source of information for release by the department and responds to requests for information by the news media and the community.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. Duties of the Public Information Officer

1. Assists news personnel in covering routine news stories, and at the scenes of incidents;
2. Assists the news media on an on-call basis;
3. Prepare and distributes news releases;
4. Arrange for and assists at, news conferences;
5. Coordinates and authorizes the release of information about victims, witnesses and suspects.

B. Cooperation with the Media

1. Authorized news media representatives should have reasonable access to the PIO, the Chief of Police or his/her designee and operations of the department as governed by this

54.1 Police Media Relations

policy. When information must be denied to a media representative, the basis for that denial should be fully and courteously explained.

2. This department 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 requested 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. Ranking officers at crime or incident scenes may release information of a factual nature to the media as governed by this policy or refer the inquiry to the PIO. Where the officer is unsure of the facts or the propriety of releasing information, he shall refer the inquiry to the PIO.
 6. Written press statements shall be released only following approval of the department's PIO or Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- C. Special Considerations—Criminal Matters
1. Departmental personnel shall extend every reasonable courtesy to news media representatives at crime scenes. This may include closer access of personnel and equipment than available to the general public to the degree that it does not interfere with the police mission or the movement of traffic.
 2. The news media shall not be allowed access to any area or scene of an incident or crime where there is a possibility that evidence may be damaged, altered, destroyed or otherwise prejudiced by its existence being published or portrayed. Once evidence has been processed, removed and secured by the department, the media may be allowed to enter by permission of the commanding officer at the scene.
 - a. On private property, photography, film or videotape recording requires the permission of the owner or the owner's representative.
 3. When an individual is charged with a criminal offense and is sought by law enforcement authorities, photographs or mug shots may be released to the media to help locate the individual. No departmental photographs, mug shots, videotapes, film or composites of subjects in custody shall otherwise be released to the media unless authorized by the PIO or the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
 - a. Daily administrative reports of criminal activity will be made available on a routine basis to media representatives. Statistical reports of criminal activity will also be made available to the media upon request.
- D. Special Considerations—Non-Criminal Matters
1. At the scene of significant accidents, man-made or natural catastrophes, 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.
- E. Information Release
1. In the absence of the Public Information Officer, another person will be designated to perform the duties. During weekends or Holidays, the Commanding Officer of the Detective Bureau will fulfill this responsibility.

54.1 Police Media Relations

Members of the media are not prohibited from contacting members of the department; however, only personnel authorized by the Chief of Police may give out news releases. Other personnel may read news releases prepared by the Chief of Police, the Assistant Chiefs of Police, the Patrol Commander, the Detective Commander, the Public Information Officer, or their designee in accordance with this procedure.

Media representatives will 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, including pending investigations;
- b. deprive a person of 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 department under confidential circumstances;
- e. disclose investigative techniques and procedures, thereby impairing future effectiveness of the department; or
- f. endanger the life or physical safety of any person.

F. Juvenile Information

1. Records of any juveniles may be released to the representatives of the media who wish to obtain information for the purpose of reporting news without revealing the identity of the child involved, or as otherwise authorized under W.S.S. 48.396.