

<p>Accreditation Standards: 54.1.1, 54.1.2, 54.1.3; CFA 28.01, 28.02, 28.04, 28.05,</p> <p>Revisions: 08/97; 07/07; 10/07; 11/12: 02/15</p> <p>References: FSS Chapter 119</p>	<p>University of Florida Police Department</p>  <p>Department Standards Directive</p>	<p>Responsibility: Community Services</p> <p>Pages: 7</p> <p>Attachments: None</p>
<p>TITLE: PUBLIC INFORMATION</p>		

7200 Public Information

7200.1 Purpose The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for the implementation and management of a Departmental public information system.

7200.2 Discussion. The University of Florida Police Department has established a cooperative climate with the news media. By providing the news media and the community with information on Department administration and operations, a relationship of mutual trust can be maintained. The media shall be extended the same courtesy afforded the general public.

7200.3 Policy. It is the policy of the University of Florida Police Department to release information on matters of public interest in a manner that does not interfere with criminal investigations or Department operations and consistent with FSS Chapter [119](#) (Public Records Law).

7200.4 Procedure. Under the authority of the Chief, the Public Information Officer or designee shall serve as the spokesperson for the Department and will handle the release of all information. The Chief or designee will be notified as soon as possible of all incidents concerning Department liability or which may result in heightened community interest.

A. Responsibilities of the Public Information Officer shall include, but not be limited to:

1. Morning report review and Crime Log/Fire Log Updates. The Public Information Officer or designee will review the police incident reports on a daily basis (Monday through Friday except on weekends or holidays). After review, provide electronic PDF copies, as appropriate, of select reports to the Chief, Deputy Chiefs, and Operations Commanders. Upon completion, update both the Crime Log and Fire Log on-line in accordance with applicable federal guidelines.

- 2.** After the completion of the Crime Log/Fire Log updates, the Public Information Officer or designee will also review the Clery Act crime tracking report and classify each report as appropriate for statistical reference and documentation.
- 3.** Assisting news personnel in covering routine news stories, and at the scene of incidents;
 - a.** Act as a liaison with news media representatives and the Department for the dissemination of news to include but not be limited to:
 - (1)** Specific incidents;
 - (2)** Statistical information;
 - (3)** Feature stories on Department activities, personnel, or changes;
 - b.** Respond to incident scenes of concern to the public and handle informational release;
- 4.** Responding to news media inquiries, in person, by e-mail, or by telephone;
 - a.** Be available in person at the Department to answer media queries during normal business hours;
 - b.** Be available to answer media queries by telephone or e-mail during normal business hours; or may be contacted by similar means after normal business hours through the Communications Section.
 - c.** After normal business hours, shall respond in person to media queries after receiving approval from the Chief or designee to do so;
- 5.** Arranging for and assisting with news conferences;
 - a.** News conferences may be conducted with the approval of the Chief or designee and coordinated with staff from the University of Florida University Relations as necessary.
 - b.** In most instances, the Chief, a division commander, or the officer in charge of the investigation and other knowledgeable personnel shall be present to provide additional background information to the media.
 - c.** Department representatives shall be appropriately attired and respond to media queries in a courteous manner.
 - d.** Improper or adversarial questions from the media shall be addressed by the Public Information Officer.

e. The media representatives shall be furnished with appropriate press packets providing:

- (1)** General press release detailing the incident including correctly spelled names, dates of birth, and addresses of suspects;
- (2)** Applicable statistics;
- (3)** Photographs of suspects, news clippings, and other visual objects that will meet the needs of television news.

6. Preparing and releasing Department news releases;

- a.** Review all incident reports on a daily basis to determine if an incident is newsworthy;
- b.** Prepare a release of relevant information for the Chief's or designee's approval. All releases shall conform to the statutory requirements of Chapter [119](#) Florida Statutes;
- c.** Upon approval, the news release shall be forwarded to area media by e-mail and facsimile;
- d.** A copy of the release shall be placed in the incident case file in Records Section;
- e.** The Public Information Officer shall be available to answer any additional media queries.

7. Assisting with crisis situations within the Department.

- a.** The Public Information Officer shall assist the Chief or designee in providing information to the public during natural and manmade disasters, catastrophic events, and major fires and shall assist the media in their coverage of these events.

8. Coordinating with the Chief or designee the release of information.

- a.** All information concerning confidential or sensitive investigations or operations shall be released in accordance with federal and state laws and the with the approval of the Chief or designee.

9. Releasing information about victims, witnesses, and suspects as authorized by law.

- a. Victim, witness, and suspect information shall be released in compliance with Chapter [119](#) Florida Statutes and Department policy.

B. Notification of Public Information Officer. Patrol shift supervisors are responsible for notifying the Public Information Officer or designee of any incidents or situations that will likely generate media interest.

1. When at the scene, the Public Information Officer shall be solely responsible for issuing statements and official releases concerning the incident.
2. If the incident is of a significant nature that could reflect on the University or generate questions to other departments around campus (i.e. death, suicide, sexual battery, violent crime, employee arrested as suspect in a crime), the Public Information Officer will contact the University of Florida University Relations Office and provide updated information regarding the incident.

C. Issuance of Statements and News Releases.

1. The Public Information Officer or designee will be the single point of contact for the Department for information released to the news media:
 - a. At incident scenes,
 - b. From department records and statistics,
 - c. On any on-going criminal investigation.
2. The Public Information Officer will serve as a liaison and may refer members of the media to appropriate persons within the Department for interviews.
3. News releases are prepared by the Public Information Officer in response to news worthy events and in support of preplanned Department activities. In order to ensure equal access, these releases will be made available on the department's web site.
4. **News Release Procedures and Distribution.** Each news release shall include the topic of the release, the case report number and the name of the person who prepared the release. Once completed and approved by the Chief or designee, the following distribution shall occur:
 - a. One copy to the Department records.
 - b. One copy to the Department Communications Center.

D. Absence of the Public Information Officer. In the absence of the Public Information Officer, the Chief will designate an individual authorized to release information to the media.

1. If the Public Information Officer is responding to a scene, but has yet to arrive, the ranking officer at the scene shall inform the media representatives that the Department spokesperson is enroute and a statement will be made upon arrival.

E. Release of Multi-Agency Information. Release of information pertaining to the mutual efforts between this Department and other agencies will be coordinated through all involved agencies. The agency having primary jurisdiction over the incident should be responsible for releasing information to the news media.

F. Information to be Released. The Department will release information to the news media in accordance with the Public Records Law FSS Chapter [119](#).

1. The following information is public record and shall be made available:
 - a. The time, date, location, and nature of a reported crime.
 - b. The name, sex, age and address of a person arrested, or the victim of a crime except as specified in **G. 1.**, below.
 - c. The time, date and location of an arrest.
 - d. The crime charged.
 - e. Under the provisions of Florida Statute, a law enforcement agency may release for publication the name, photograph, and address of a child taken into custody if the child has been taken into custody by a law enforcement officer for a violation of law which, if committed by an adult, would be a felony, or the name, photograph, and address of any child who has been found by a court to have committed three or more violations of law which, if committed by an adult, would be misdemeanors.
 - f. A photograph of the accused suspect if it is available for release in accordance with FSS Chap. [119](#).

G. Information not to be Released. The Department will not release certain information to the media pursuant to the Public Records Law FSS Chap. [119](#).

1. The following information **shall not** be released to the news media in active criminal investigations:
 - a. Under the provisions of Florida State Statute 119, any information which reveals the home or employment telephone number, home or employment

address, or personal assets of a person who has been the victim of sexual battery, aggravated child abuse, aggravated stalking, harassment, aggravated battery, or domestic violence shall not be released provided the victim makes written request that such information not be released.

(1) Such information shall cease to be exempt 5 years after the receipt of the written request.

b. The victim of a sexual battery, child abuse or person under the age of 16 years old who is a victim of a sex offense.

c. Statements related to prior criminal record, the character or reputation of an accused person, or a prospective witness.

d. The identity, testimony, or credibility of a prospective witness that is involved in the incident.

e. Admissions, confessions, the contents of a statement or refusal to make a statement, or alibi attributable to an accused person.

f. The performance or the results of any examinations/tests, the refusal of the accused to take an examination/test or to participate in a line-up.

g. Statements concerning the credibility or anticipated testimony of a prospective witness.

h. The possibility of a plea of guilty or innocence to the offense charged or to a lesser offense, or any other judicial disposition.

i. Opinions concerning evidence or any argument in the case whether or not it is anticipated that the evidence or argument will be used at trial.

j. Name(s) addresses, and photographs of any subject sought for a crime, but not yet formally charged, unless help is wanted from the news media in an effort to locate the subject.

k. The contents of any suicide note.

l. Evidence collected in relation to a crime committed.

m. The name of a victim in a death investigation shall not be released until:

(1) The victim has been positively identified.

(2) The next of kin have been notified.

n. The provisions of subsection **l. (1) and (2)** above also apply in serious injury situations where death is imminent. If next of kin have not been notified within a reasonable amount of time, this information may be released.

o. If the accused is a sworn member of the department or a former law enforcement officer, any information provided regarding those accused will be done so in accordance with FSS Chap. [119](#).

H. Media Credentials. The University Police Department will recognize media credentials issued or honored by other agencies within the Alachua County area.

1. Crime Scenes. Crime scenes are established to preserve evidence and to ensure safety of persons. Crime scenes may be closed to all unauthorized persons including members of the media. However, in special situations media entry may be allowed after the crime scene has been secured, the area has been searched, and the preservation and processing of all evidence has been completed, but only with the approval of the ranking supervisor in charge of the investigation.

a. After a crime scene has been processed and released, only the responsible University personnel, legal occupants or their designee, may grant permission to media personnel to enter private areas, dwellings or the surrounding curtilage to gather news.

b. Media personnel may photograph or report anything they observe when legally present at an emergency scene.

2. Natural Disasters/Catastrophic Events/Major Fires. Upon producing valid credentials, authorized media representatives may enter any area closed because of danger to public health or safety. The risk of possible danger remains with the individual media person involved. It is not the responsibility of the Department to provide for the safety of media representatives who voluntarily choose to enter a restricted or closed area. Should the danger escalate, the Chief or designee may order anyone from the area.

I. Procedure for Changes to Public Information Policy. The Public Information Officer shall be responsible for identifying issues that may occur between the Department and the media. This policy shall be available on the Department website to make it easy for the media to provide input. This input shall be taken into consideration in the formulation of new policies.

7200.5 Glossary. None.

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Approved: _____
Linda J. Stump-Kurnick, Chief

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