

SAN DIEGO POLICE DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE

DATE: October 16, 2015

NUMBER: 8.09 – CRITICAL INCIDENTS

SUBJECT: MEDIA RELATIONS AT CRITICAL INCIDENTS

RELATED POLICY: [8.09](#)

ORIGINATING DIVISION: OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

NEW PROCEDURE:

PROCEDURAL CHANGE:

SUPERSEDES: DP 8.09 – 8/16/13

I. PURPOSE

This Department procedure establishes guidelines for the proper disclosure of information to the media at critical incidents.

II. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all members of the Department.

III. BACKGROUND

Critical incidents are of great interest to the public and news media. It is necessary, therefore, to establish guidelines for the proper disclosure of information to the media without interrupting the Department's management of a critical incident.

The general parameters for the release and restriction of information to the media are described in Department Procedure 1.30, Press Release and Media Relations.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Media Relations Responsibility

1. Upon arriving at a critical incident scene, a Department Public Information Officer will assist in providing information and direction to the media.
2. The Incident Commander will designate a person (preferably a supervisor) to carry out this liaison function pending arrival of a Public Information Officer.
3. The Public Information Officer will be notified of any questionable or improper conduct of a media representative.

B. Call-out Procedures for a Public Information Officer

1. All requests for call-outs shall be coordinated through the Watch Commander. A Public Information Officer may be requested to provide liaison with the news media in the following situations:
 - a. Any time a Command Post is activated to handle a large incident;
 - b. For large-scale SWAT operations;
 - c. Upon the death or critical injury of a San Diego police officer;
 - d. For any incident other than an officer-involved shooting that results in the death or critical injury of a citizen as a result of police action; and,
 - e. For incidents such as newsworthy arrests, lifesaving acts, and crime series information.
2. Public Information Officers' home telephone and cell phone numbers are available in the Watch Commander's Office.

NEW

C. Duties of a Public Information Officer

Under the direction of the Incident Commander, a Public Information Officer shall:

1. Receive a general incident briefing from the Incident Commander or his/her designee;
2. Designate a media staging/briefing area near the Command Post. The area should be as close as possible to the Command Post without interfering with operations;
3. Identify locations accessible and restricted to media personnel;

4. Conduct media briefings, remain available to media personnel, and monitor their activities; and,
5. Maintain contact with, and advise, the Watch Commander of media briefing locations, updates, and dictate informal news releases for incoming media calls.

V. **NEWS MEDIA AT DISASTER AREAS AND CRIME SCENES**

NEW

- A. The Incident Commander at a disaster or crime scene is responsible for providing appropriate information to authorized news media.
- B. Disaster and accident scenes may be closed to the public pursuant to 409.5 PC; however, news media representatives are exempt from this restriction.
 1. As soon as a disaster or accident scene has been identified and secured, authorized media shall be permitted free access to the area after being advised of any existing danger (provided the area is not a crime scene.)
 2. Department members shall not decline to rescue news media personnel in danger, but will not provide an escort into or out of dangerous areas.
 3. Authorized members of the news media are to be permitted free movement in the area as long as they do not interfere with law enforcement or public safety functions.
 4. A Public Information Officer will maintain liaison with the news media.
- C. Crime scenes shall be closed to all unauthorized persons, including the news media.
 1. Crime scenes in areas of public access may be opened for media inspection after the scene is secured and any search for, and preservation and processing of, evidence have been completed.
 2. Reporters and/or photographers shall be kept far enough from a crime scene being searched or preserved to protect it from being disturbed or evidence from being damaged.
 3. News media representatives have no right of access to private property greater than the general public and are subject to public access restrictions imposed by the owner or person in charge when a crime scene is located on private property.

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4. Once inner and outer perimeters are securely established at a scene, media should be allowed access to the safest locations within the outer perimeter as determined by the Incident Commander.
 - a. News media should not be allowed within the inner perimeter. Access to the inner perimeter shall only be authorized by the Incident Commander.

D. The scene of a Police Department tactical operation (e.g., SWAT) is the same as a crime scene, except that authorized news media shall be permitted within the outer perimeter of the scene and are subject to any restrictions set forth by the Incident Commander.

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1. Once inner and outer perimeters are securely established at a scene, media should be allowed access to the safest locations within the outer perimeter as determined by the Incident Commander.
2. A Public Information Officer or, in his/her absence, another person designated by the Incident Commander, shall be designated to keep the news media briefed.
3. Department members shall not jeopardize a tactical mission in order to accommodate the news media, but every effort shall be made to keep reporters well informed of the progress of the operation.

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4. News media should not be allowed within the inner perimeter. Access to the inner perimeter shall only be authorized by the Incident Commander.

E. "Authorized News Media" representatives are those persons possessing current, valid media credentials issued by SDPD or any bona fide law enforcement agency, or other suitable identification establishing regular news media affiliation or employment.

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F. "Freelance" reporters or photographers possessing a valid San Diego Police Department media credential will be deemed as authorized news media representatives, or other suitable identification establishing regular news media affiliation or employment.