



NEW ORLEANS POLICE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL

CHAPTER: 54.1

TITLE: MEDIA RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION

EFFECTIVE: 10/22/2017

REVISED: Replaces Policy 346

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Chapter is to set forth guidelines with respect to media releases and media access to scenes of disasters, crime investigations, emergencies, and other law enforcement activities.

DEFINITIONS

Public statement—Information released to the general public and/or representatives of the news media concerning NOPD or its operations.

POLICY STATEMENT

1. Police related incidents and their results are matters of public concern.
2. NOPD is committed to establishing a cooperative climate in which the news media may obtain timely and accurate communication pertaining to issues within the purview or mandate of the Department, except in those instances where the Constitutional rights of the individuals involved in the investigation, the investigative process or the fair administration of justice might be hampered by premature disclosure of investigative information to the public.
3. Information released pursuant to the provisions of this Chapter shall be relayed to the Public Affairs Division – Public Information Officer as soon as possible.
4. Members shall make every effort to ensure the Public Affairs Division – Public Information Officer, acting in his/her capacity as the Department's information officer, is apprised of all newsworthy developments prior to learning of them through the media.
5. Information to be released to the public is often shared by two or more public agencies, often involved in a mutual effort. This can include the New Orleans Fire Department (NOFD), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or other law enforcement agencies that work with the NOPD. In these instances, coordination on the release of information with other partner agencies shall be accomplished prior to releasing the information to determine the agency with primary/principal jurisdiction. The agency with primary/principal jurisdiction will be responsible for the release of information.

6. NOPD's policy is to support the crime fighting capabilities of the **Crimestoppers Program** by providing a Crimestoppers Liaison Officer that shall coordinate a Department wide information sharing system and work in conjunction with the Public Affairs Division Public Information Officers.
7. NOPD is committed to working with the entire community to achieve the goal "**to provide professional police services to the public in order to maintain order and protect life and property**" expressed in our Mission Statement.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS DIVISION

8. The Communications Director is the overall coordinator of the Department's Public Affairs Division and the Department's public relations efforts.
9. The Department's public relations efforts include participating in speaking engagements involving and held before civic groups, social organizations, religious/church groups and schools.
10. The New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau convention planners rely on the Department to provide safety tips to their participants. The Public Affairs Division – Public Information Officers speak before thousands of conventioners who are interested in our public relations approach.
11. The Department's public relations efforts are also directed to promoting, producing, participating and coordinating numerous public service announcements (PSAs) for television, radio, and print media. Major emphasis in the Department PSAs are directed toward the following topics:
 - (a) Tourist Safety.
 - (b) Mardi Gras Safety.
 - (c) Work in conjunction with the New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau to ensure safety during such high profile events as Super Bowls, annual Sugar Bowl, Musical Festivals and Presidential visits.
 - (d) DWI Prevention.
 - (e) Auto Theft Prevention.
 - (f) Holiday Crime Prevention brochures
12. The Public Affairs Division is part of the Office of the Superintendent and shall be responsible for:
 - (a) All release of information to the news media by the Department.
 - (b) Informing the public through the news media of current police operations and services.
 - (c) Acting as the Department's liaison with the news media to foster and maintain a professional rapport between the news media and the Department.
 - (d) Gathering, assessing, and disseminating relevant and pertinent news worthy information from units within the Department to the news media.
 - (e) Responding to crime scenes, major incidents, and events which draw media attention and facilitating the coordination and release of information to the news media.
 - (f) Processing and issuing Department press releases to media representatives.
 - (g) Preparation of the Public Affairs Annual Report.
 - (h) Coordinating, assisting, and authoring the release of information concerning agency investigations and operations.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS AND APPEARANCES

13. Members of the Department are constrained in their activities involving the public and private disclosure of information. Specifically:
 - (a) **Rule 6, paragraph 3** – Public Statements and Appearances;
 - (b) **Rule 3, paragraph 13** – Social Networking Websites, Facebook, Myspace, Print or Transmitted media, etc.; and
 - (c) **Rule 2, paragraph 3** – Honesty and Truthfulness.

PRESS RELEASE PROCEDURES

14. The Public Affairs Division shall:
 - (a) Assist at all Department news conferences;
 - (b) Assist in facilitating information exchange in crisis situations, disasters, and emergencies handled by the Department:
 - i. With other agencies of City government,
 - ii. With external partner agencies, and
 - iii. With the public through media outlets.
 - (c) Coordinate the arrangements of information exchange and release external to the Department.
15. The assigned, on-duty Public Affairs Division – Public Information Officer will prepare the information provided by Department members for release to the media.
16. This may be achieved through a formal written news release approved by the Superintendent of Police or by the Communications Director or his/her designee and then disseminated equally to media agencies through:
 - (a) Media Information,
 - (b) Flyers, or
 - (c) Verbal and/or other communicative means.
17. Media information, within the constraints of this Chapter and law, will be provided upon request, or where deemed of sufficient interest to public welfare or safety.
18. Copies (electronic or physical) of all written and disseminated information will be maintained in the Public Affairs Division for a period of 3 years after release unless involved in litigation where it will be maintained for 3 years after the litigation and all appeals are concluded.
19. When investigators have determined a crime trend is occurring, or the public's safety is at risk, the on-duty Public Information Officer shall be notified by the Communications Director to prepare a public advisory (i.e., sexual assaults, missing persons, etc.) for dissemination to the news media.

AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL TO RELEASE MEDIA INFORMATION

20. NOPD may specifically designate members to release brief information but shall do so only after authorization by the Superintendent of Police, Communications Director, and his /her designee.
21. This authorization should be based on the member's experience or position within the Department.
22. Any information released to the media must be factual and accurate at the time released. No supposition, suspicions or inferences will be allowed.

23. Information provided at the scene will be brief.
24. Requests for an on-camera interviews may be allowed provided the request is first approved and coordinated through the Public Affairs Division.
25. Clothing or attire for members, who are authorized to give on-camera interviews, must be presentable and acceptable by the Superintendent of Police or his/her designee prior to the interview.
26. No member shall be coerced or ordered to provide an interview. **Each member of the Department has the right to decline on-camera interviews or interviews in any other form without specifying a reason.**

MEDIA ACCESS TO POLICE SCENES

27. Police lines on police scenes are established to restrict persons from entering the area of a crime scene or the scene of a major fire, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event.
28. News media representatives may be admitted into these areas under the following conditions:
 - (a) Representatives of the media are recognized by an official media identification;
 - (b) The media presence does not jeopardize police operations or the investigation;
 - (c) When authorized by the supervisory member or principal investigator in charge of the scene; and
 - (d) The media admission is coordinated through the Public Affairs Division – Public Information Officer on the scene. The Public Affairs Division – Public Information Officer must be consulted and concur prior to any approval.
29. While a media representative may be permitted into a restricted police area, they shall not be admitted into a crime scene or other area which has been secured to preserve evidence or is under active investigation.

REVIEW OF DEPARTMENT RECORDS AND INFORMATION

30. Only the Superintendent of Police or his/her designee may release of information regarding an ongoing criminal investigation.
31. Members shall not release the following without prior express authorization:
 - (a) The prior criminal record, character, or reputation of the accused;
 - (b) Photographs of the accused from police data, evidence, or private sources that are turned over to the Department;
 - (c) Reference to the existence or content of any confession, admission of guilt, or statement made by the accused or the failure or refusal by the accused to make a statement;
 - (d) The results of any examination or tests conducted or refusal by the accused to submit to any tests or examinations;
 - (e) The identity, testimony, or credibility of any present or prospective witness;
 - (f) Any opinion by police personnel regarding the strength or weakness of the investigation, guilt or innocence of the accused;
 - (g) Any opinion of the Department's personnel regarding the merits of the case or quality of evidence gathered;
 - (h) Personal information identifying the victim, or information identifying juveniles, or information received from other law enforcement agencies without their

- agreement to release the information.
- (i) Personal information and/or incidents involving juvenile victims, juvenile suspects, or adult victims of sexual assault;
 - (j) Exact municipal addresses or residential locations where incidents of sexual assaults may have occurred;
 - (k) The identity of deceased persons shall remain undisclosed or confidential until such times as proper notification of the deceased's family can be completed;
 - (l) Video tapes, photographs, sketches, or any other images of suspects being sought by the Department; or
 - (m) Information deemed "**Law Enforcement Sensitive**," particularly information involving internal departmental investigations of members or member photographs.
32. Department members who represent organizations (i.e. PANO, FOP, BOP, Mardi Gras Krewe, etc.) other than NOPD shall do so on their own time and attired in civilian clothes. Use of police titles and/or implied representation of the Department is prohibited.
33. Members are prohibited from contacting news media representatives for the purpose of staging photographs or video opportunities for showing arrested subjects being walked and booked into Central Lock-Up or any other holding facility. Only the Superintendent of Police or his/her designee may authorized this type of activity and it shall be coordinated through the Public Affairs Division, Communications Director.
34. The use of any Departmental vehicles (marked or unmarked), equipment, or other property, in the filming of any commercial, television, or motion picture productions without prior written approval of the Superintendent of Police or his/her authorized designee is prohibited.
35. Requests for the use of Departmental vehicles (marked or unmarked), equipment, or other property in a production shall be in writing along with a copy of the production script attached.
36. Such a request shall be addressed to the Superintendent of Police and forwarded through the chain of command to the Public Affairs Division – Communications Director.
37. The Public Affairs Division – Communications Director, or his/her designee, shall review the script to determine:
- (a) NOPD's role is in the production, and
 - (b) If the Department's image is portrayed in a positive manner.
38. If the request for the use of Departmental vehicles (marked or unmarked), equipment, or other property, in a production is approved by the Superintendent of Police, the requesting person shall be instructed to contact the Public Affairs Division – Communications Director to discuss the restrictions and/or parameters for the use of the requested departmental property as outlined in the Superintendent's approval.