



LINCOLN POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDERS

NUMBER: 1160
TOPIC: MEDIA RELATIONS
ISSUED BY: MICHON MORROW, CHIEF OF POLICE
DATE: 1-1-2024
SUPERSEDES: G.O. 1160, 2022
REFERENCE: G.O. 1940, 18 U. S. Code §2721, NRS 29-2520, 29-3521, 84-712.05(5)(a)

I. POLICY

The Lincoln Police Department is committed to informing the media of events that are of public interest and community concern. Information released in criminal cases will conform to the Nebraska Bar-Press guidelines.

II. PROCEDURE

A. Employees Authorized to Release Information at the scene of an incident or event.

1. Officers of any rank may release limited information at the scene of incidents, consistent with the guidelines in this General Order, however, requests for information shall be referred to a supervisor when one is present at the scene.
2. Supervisors may release information concerning ongoing or completed criminal investigations, consistent with the guidelines in this General Order.

B. Public Information Office (54.1.1)

1. The Public Information Office shall:
 - a. Assist media in covering stories at the scenes of incidents;
 - b. Be available for on-call responses to the media;
 - c. Prepare and distribute news releases;
 - d. Coordinate news conferences;
 - e. Coordinate the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects;
 - f. Provide public information to assist in crisis situations within the agency;
 - g. Coordinate the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations;
 - h. Conduct regular media briefings;
 - i. Maintain liaison with media organizations and city communications;
 - j. Retain the department's public facing Social Media accounts in accordance with the City's Social Media Policy;
 - k. Provide guidance and train other officers who post on our social media platforms.
 - l. Retains all log in credentials for department approved social media accounts.
2. Duty commanders will be the contact with the media during non-business hours.

C. Guidelines for Release of Information

1. General Information
 - a. News releases are coordinated and distributed through the Public Information Office. A copy of the release will be maintained by the Public Information Office and forwarded to the duty commanders and the chief of police.
 - b. Information regarding department programs, special projects, and other general information may be released by the appropriate commanding officer, unit manager, or their designee. Notification regarding any media inquiry should be made to the department PIO office in advance of the interaction or after denial of such request. Notification regarding unplanned or impromptu media interviews should be made directly after the interview.

- c. News conferences will be scheduled by the Public Information Office at the direction of the chief of police. All local media will be notified to ensure equal access to information.
 - d. Matters of department policy or issues which require interpretation or explanation of written directives shall be referred to the chief of police.
2. Information about Current Incidents
 - a. The location of a crime, traffic crash or incident may be released upon inquiry, unless there is a danger of injury or contamination of the scene.
 - b. The location of crimes in progress, hazardous incidents, and SWAT calls shall not be released until a press area has been established. A commander will determine when the media may be advised of the location and designated press area.
 3. Information at the Scene of Incidents
 - a. A brief, factual description of the incident may be released by officers at the scene.
 - b. More detailed information may be released only with supervisory authorization.
 4. Information About Criminal Investigations
 - a. Supervisors may release information about ongoing or completed criminal investigations when the release of information will not interfere with any continuing investigation.
 - (1) Supervisors should notify the Public Information Office when releasing such information.
 - b. The following types of information concerning a criminal investigation may be released without permission of the chief except in cases of violent crime:
 - (1) Arrested persons' names and biographical information, excluding youths unless charged as adults;
 - (2) The offense alleged in any arrest;
 - (3) Victims' names and biographical information, except:
 - i. Names of deceased victims shall be withheld until family notification has been made and no sooner than 24 hours;
 - ii. Sexual assault, domestic violence, hate crimes and human trafficking;
 - iii. Youth information.
 - iv. Gang related offenses.
 - (4) The length of the investigation, and number of personnel involved;
 - (5) A brief description of the circumstances of any arrest, including time, place, whether resistance or pursuit occurred, possession or use of any weapons;
 - (6) The description of a suspect. Ordinarily, the name of a suspect shall only be released when a warrant has been issued and public assistance is needed for apprehension. In the event that a suspect represents an immediate threat to public safety, the suspect's name and identifying information may be released even if a warrant has not yet been issued.
 - (7) Results of any examination or test regarding the presence of, amount concentration of alcohol or drugs in any body fluid.

D. Information Which Should Not be Released

1. Opinions concerning the guilt, innocence, or character of an arrested person, or concerning the identity, credibility, or anticipated testimony of prospective witnesses;
2. Statements predicting or influencing the outcome of a trial;
3. The refusal or failure of a person to submit to examinations or tests, unless documented in a public probable cause affidavit;
4. The existence or contents of any confession or statement;
5. Information specific to the offense that could only be known by the perpetrator, or information that may cause the suspect to flee;
6. Detailed information concerning testimonial or physical evidence, the release of which might prejudice the right of the defendant to a fair trial.
7. Employees should not volunteer the prior criminal records of an accused, except when this is necessary to aid in their apprehension or to warn the public of any dangers the accused presents.

E. Photographs or Images

1. Jail booking photos are public information and may be released to the media.
2. Employees shall not deliberately pose a person in custody for photography or televising by the media.

3. Employees shall not interfere with unposed photographing or televising by the media except when the photographing or televising would interfere with official duties.
4. DMV images are restricted and shall only be released in compliance with 18 U.S. Code § 2721.
5. Jail booking photos are not to be used when presenting an image of a victim in any case.

F. Access to Incident Scenes (41.2.4, 54.1.3)

1. Although the department will strive to provide reasonable assistance to the media in reporting news, access to the scenes or surroundings of incidents may be restricted in order to:
 - a. Protect the scene;
 - b. Prevent exposure to clear hazards.
 - c. Maintain the integrity of the investigation.
2. Supervisors and Officers needing to establish such restrictions should:
 - a. Inform any media personnel of the restricted area and purpose of the restriction.
 - b. Designate a suitable area on public property for media access that provides the least restriction necessary to accomplish the purpose.

G. Coordination of Information Releases with Other Agencies (54.1.1)

1. Requests for information about cases or incidents not involving the department should be referred to the agencies involved.
2. When multiple agencies are involved in incidents, the agency having primary jurisdiction should coordinate the release of information to the media.

H. Records Unit personnel may release public record information to the media, consistent with General Order 1940.

