



RICHARDSON POLICE DEPARTMENT



GENERAL ORDER

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I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this Order is to outline the proper procedure and circumstances for notification of the Public Information Officer and designate who is authorized to release information.

II. POLICY:

It is the policy of the Richardson Police Department to provide the news media and public with all information to which they are entitled by law. This information will be disseminated in an orderly, professional manner. The Public Information Officer must be informed of emergency situations in a proper and timely manner.

III. PROCEDURE:

A. Persons authorized to release information to the media or public:

- 1. Public Information Officer(s)
- 2. Persons or positions as specifically permitted under this order or other General Order
- 3. Chief of Police or designee

Note: On those occasions when someone within the agency is designated by the Chief to act as the Public Information Officer (PIO) because of particular knowledge of the subject area or due to assignment, this person will be the sole source of information for the media.

B. Open Records Request from News Media

- 1. All media open records requests will be forwarded to the designated Public Information Officer (PIO), who will advise the Chief of Police; and forward to the Open Records Specialist.
- 2. All information, recordings, documents or other materials acceptable for release will be released through the Open Records Specialist or the PIO after review by the City Attorney unless otherwise authorized in this Order.

C. Notification of the PIO

1. Supervisory personnel who are initially responsible at a scene which could or does generate media interest will notify Communications by radio or telephone of any situation which requires notification of the PIO. Upon notification by supervisory personnel, as defined above, Communications will contact the designated PIO.
2. Situations that require supervisory personnel, as defined above, to notify Communications that the PIO should be notified include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Traffic accidents with death(s) or death(s) likely to result.
 - b. Shootings, cuttings, involving serious injury or death.
 - c. Any unnatural deaths, i.e., drownings, industrial accidents, suicides.
 - d. Any incident where the police may be placed in a litigious situation, such as police shootings, prisoners' death, serious injuries while in custody, including attempted suicide or self-inflicted injury that requires transfer to a medical facility.
 - e. Any financial institution robbery.
 - f. Any aggravated robbery with serious bodily injury or death.
 - g. Snipers, barricaded subjects, hostage situations.
 - h. Aircraft accidents or emergency landings, train derailments.
 - i. Found bombs/explosions.
 - j. Activation of the SWAT Unit for the purpose of responding to a hostage or barricaded persons incident.
 - k. Arrests which result in clearance of numerous or significant offenses.
 - l. Natural disasters which endanger lives or create hazardous conditions, such as:
 - 1) Tomadoes
 - 2) Massive Flooding
 - 3) Ice Storms
 - 4) High winds with extensive damage
 - m. Closure of a major traffic thoroughfare for an extended period.
 - n. Missing children, fifteen (15) years of age or younger, or children with a proven mental or physical disability, and there is reasonable belief that the child is in danger of serious bodily harm or death.

- o. When it is determined by an Investigations Division Commander that the Amber Alert will be activated.
- p. Anytime "A Child is Missing" activation is made.
- q. Any other situations that supervisory personnel initially responsible at the scene believe merits notification of the PIO.
 - 1) Subject to verification by patrol personnel at the scene, Communications personnel may inform the media of traffic related matters that are current, such as a motor vehicle accident, high water, road closures/detour, and other hazardous conditions.
 - 2) Notification of incidents involving chemical spillage, gas leaks, and major fires such as apartment complexes, will be directed to the Fire Marshall and do not require notification of the PIO unless there is significant police involvement in the accident.
- 3. Supervisors on the scene of a major traffic tie-up, accident, road closure, etc., may contact local radio traffic reporters directly or through Communications in order to give traffic information which would aid motorists in avoiding the scene.

D. Personnel Interviews

- 1. Supervisors, (Sergeants and above), at the scene of a major incident resulting in the presence of media personnel may conduct interviews with reporters with prior approval of the PIO when the nature of such interviews would be appropriate.
- 2. Personnel contacted directly by the media for statements shall refer the media to the PIO, or contact the PIO themselves prior to the Interview.
 - a. Due to the nature of certain job functions, the following personnel may respond to media inquiries about their specific job functions without prior approval.
 - 1) Crime Prevention Officers.
 - 2) Communications Personnel as noted above in Section III.C.2.q.1).
 - b. In these situations, the PIO shall be contacted and briefed on the context of the interview. If the PIO is unavailable, the information will be sent via electronic mail.
- 3. All interviews arranged through the PIO will be with the consent of personnel to be interviewed.
 - a. The PIO will advise the person to be interviewed of the subject matter, nature, and intended use of the story.
 - b. The identity of the interviewer will also be known.

- c. The PIO will be available at the time of the interview, if requested.
- 4. It is the responsibility of the employee being interviewed to inform and receive approval from their commander.

E. Management of Photography, Television and Recordings

- 1. In public places, photography, television and tape recordings shall not be restricted except:
 - a. Where danger exists to life or property.
 - b. Where it interferes with the lawful rights of others.
 - c. Where it interferes with an official function.
 - d. In a crime scene search area.
- 2. In Police Buildings
 - a. The media may have access to the lobby.
 - b. The accused will not be posed or paraded for the news media inside the police building.
 - c. The accused will not be permitted to hold interviews while in police custody.

IV. THIS ORDER REPLACES: GO 1.21-89, 5.02.01-89, 4.06.01-89

V. EFFECTIVE DATE: January 30, 1989 REVISED: August 24, 2017

Jimmy L. Spivey
Chief of Police
Richardson Police Department