



MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

311.00 MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

DALLAS FIRE-RESCUE

Effective: 2/1/12
Revised: 09/27/17

311.00 MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

311.01 Mission

To establish and maintain the vital communications link between the residents of the City of Dallas, the Media, and the Dallas Fire-Rescue Department

311.02 Purpose

- A. The Media and Public Relations Office exists primarily to cultivate and enrich a culture that is aligned with the mission, values, and goals of the Department. It will demonstrate this through its Public Information Officers (PIO) as they interact with the public, the media, members of the Department and other organizations.
- B. Public Relations is a critical function of every organization in both the public and private sector. Dallas Fire-Rescue is not, by any means, immune from potential negative media coverage and a public backlash. Continuous negative media reports could impact morale within the Department and cause public distrust. Therefore, the actions of the Media and Public Relations Office, especially those that are proactive, play a crucial role in the way the department is perceived by residents of the City of Dallas, City officials and other key organizations.
- C. Positive publicity reminds the public of our purpose, gains their trust and support and builds amicable relationships with other organizations. Positive representation in the media helps Dallas Fire-Rescue maintain a good relationship with the public and makes our mission easier to accomplish. In addition, members will take pride in being part of an organization that is consistently portrayed in a positive light by the various media outlets.

311.03 Staffing

- A. The Media and Public Relations Office is staffed from 06:30 – 15:30, Monday through Friday, except for official city holidays. The office is located at 1500 Marilla, 7A-South, at Dallas City Hall and can be contacted at (214) 670-7949.
- B. The Chief of the Department has sole discretion in appointing members to serve as a PIO.

MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

- C. A member who is appointed as a PIO must successfully complete a Media/Public Relations course from the Media Relations Office as well as an advanced course in Media/Public Information from an approved external organization.

311.04 Media Interaction Procedures

- A. Members should assume their actions are always being documented, and conduct themselves in a professional manner consistent with the Department's Values.
- B. Members shall be aware that the news media and general public are authorized to be at the scenes of incidents to which the Department responds.
- C. Members shall be aware of the legally protected rights of the news media, and general public, to acquire video footage and still photographs, among other forms of documentation, at the scenes of incidents to which the Department responds.
- D. These conditions (311.04 B and C) are to be acknowledged provided that said individuals are not operating within designated incident scene boundaries, interfering with emergency operations, compromising patient care or otherwise putting themselves in a position that could negatively impact the safety of firefighters, patients, bystanders or themselves.
- E. Members shall be aware that these conditions (311.04 B and C) are not governed by Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Laws. Rather, when designated scene boundaries are not sufficient, and circumstances permit, it is the responsibility of each member to safeguard against incidental disclosures of Protected Health Information (PHI) by shielding the patient from everyone's view or moving the patient to a private location. **NOTE:** Intentionally blocking only those with cameras is not appropriate.
- F. Members shall call the Media and Public Relations Office when members of the media contact them. After office hours, members shall notify the On-Call PIO (885) through Fire Dispatch.
- G. The Chief of the Department, or the Media and Public Relations Office as designated, must approve any and all information that is to be released to the public and/or the news media. All requests for interviews from members of the Media shall be directed to the Media Relations Office with the following exceptions:
 - 1. The Incident Commander (IC) may release information pertaining to the incident in the absence of the PIO. The IC will not release the name(s) of any victim/patient(s) involved, or any information that would otherwise violate HIPAA.
 - 2. Employee Association officials may comment on topics that are of concern to their distinct members.

MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

3. Interviews that are personal and do not, in any way, involve the Department or reflect
4. negatively on the Department.

H. Members are not obligated to grant interview requests from members of the media. However, the member shall notify the Media and Public Relations Office, or 881, prior to giving an interview.

311.05 Response

- A. Public Information Officers will have the discretion of responding to any incident and may contact any DFR member at any time in the course of performing their duties.
- B. The PIO(s) will automatically respond to the following types of incidents:
 1. 3-alarm fire or greater;
 2. fire fatalities;
 3. priority 2 injury or death of a DFR member;
 4. Alert III incident;
 5. 2-alarm fires occurring during office hours;
 6. any incident that could generate media attention due to its unique nature and;
 7. when requested by the IC
- C. The On-Call PIO (885) will follow the same criteria above but will have discretion in responding to other incidents occurring after hours.
- D. All working fires will require a code 3 response. For all other calls, the type of response will be at the discretion of the responding PIO.
- E. The IC will handle Media inquiries during short-term or insignificant incidents, including 2-alarm incidents occurring after normal office hours. During all other incidents, the IC should request a PIO if not already assigned.
- F. The IC may delegate media relations activities to the Arson Investigators (684/685) on the scene in the absence of the PIO.
- G. When requested, the IC or 684/685 will relay pertinent information to the PIO in order to prepare a news release.
- H. The On-Call PIO (885) may have an extended response time after hours; therefore, the IC shall identify the need and subsequently request a PIO as soon as possible.

311.06 Press Line

- A. A telephone line (in the Media and Public Relations Office and Fire Dispatch) is established and maintained exclusively to answer inquiries from media personnel.
- B. Members will be courteous and professional when speaking to members of the media.

MANUAL OF PROCEDURES

1. The Media and Public Relations Office will assist Fire Dispatch with the press line during regular office hours.
2. Fire Dispatch should only answer questions pertaining to response location, type of incident and other negligible information that is at hand.
3. Media personnel inquiring on a major incident or requesting detailed information should be referred to the Media and Public Relations Office or the On-Call PIO (885).
4. The press line should be answered at all times with the exception of when it could compromise Fire Dispatch operations or during periods of excessive call volume.