



POLICY & PROCEDURE

ELKHART LAKE POLICE DEPARTMENT

SUBJECT: **PUBLIC INFORMATION**

SCOPE: All Department Personnel
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Public Information
Public Information Officer

PURPOSE: The purpose of this Policy & Procedure to establish a public information procedure. Police Department operations are generally matters of public record and often public interest. As such, the Elkhart Lake Police Department has the responsibility to provide citizens with information about those matters. The vehicle through which the public receives information is frequently the news media.

This Policy & Procedure consists of the following numbered sections:

- I. POLICY
- II. MEDIA RELATIONS PROCEDURES

I. POLICY

- A. It is the policy of the Elkhart Lake Police Department to cooperate fully and impartially with the news media in fulfilling its responsibility of informing the public of events within the public domain that are handled by or involve the Department, to the extent permitted by law.

II. MEDIA RELATIONS PROCEDURES

- A. The Chief of Police or designee shall act as the public information officer (PIO). The public information officer is the Department's official liaison with the news media.

The responsibilities of the public information officer are:

1. Assisting media representatives in covering newsworthy activities of the Department.
 2. Being available for on-call responses to the media.
 3. Preparing and disseminating Department news releases.
 4. Arranging for and assisting at news conferences.
 5. Assisting in crisis situations within the Department.
 6. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information regarding victims, witnesses, and suspects.
 7. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information regarding confidential agency investigations and operations.
 8. Developing and authorizing the release of information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort.
- B. The Department recognizes valid news personnel, and shall provide them with information when appropriate and allowable.
- C. A formal news release may be drafted for events of a significant nature. The news release shall adhere to guidelines for information release contained in this Policy & Procedure.
1. A copy of the release shall be sent to media representatives, and shall be made available to all news media at the same time.
 2. The Chief or designee may authorize any Department member to develop and release a news release.
 - a) The person releasing the news release must see that a copy is directed to the PIO advising them it has been released.
 3. The news release may be done at any time; however it is encouraged to be released as soon as possible after the initial incident takes place.
- D. Personal interviews of **ANY** Department employee other than the PIO must be

approved by the PIO or by the employee's supervisor.

Release of information during an interview shall follow the guidelines established in this Policy & Procedure.

- E. The PIO may contact the local media representatives to arrange a news conference in the case of a major event.
- F. The media may be allowed access at the scene of major events such as fires, natural disasters, or other catastrophic events, within the limitations of crime scene integrity, public safety, and civil rights restrictions. The media will **NOT** be allowed access inside the perimeter of a crime scene. The Incident Commander shall make all decisions regarding media mobility.
 - 1. Media requests for information shall be directed to the PIO. In the absence of the PIO, the Incident Commander shall assign the person responsible for handling matters related to the media and media requests.
- G. Communications (or Dispatch) or other civilian personnel are not authorized to release information to the media without prior approval. All media calls for information should be directed to the Department's PIO or in the event the PIO is not available to the Commanding Officer.

Michael Meeusen
Chief of Police

This Policy & Procedure cancels and supersedes any and all written directives relative to the subject matter contained herein.

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