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## 4.0 MEDIA RELATIONS

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### 4.01 POLICY

- A. No member shall release any information that would jeopardize an active investigation, prejudice an accused person's right to a fair trial, or violate the law. Every effort should be made to release appropriate information to the news media in an impartial, accurate, and timely fashion.
  - 1. Responsibilities in releasing information
    - a. It is ultimately the responsibility of the Chief of Police to release information to the public. That responsibility is generally delegated to the following personnel:
      - (1) The Operations Lieutenant will act as the primary Public Information Officer (PIO) for the Department.
      - (2) Sergeants with responsibility for a specific case or incident may be the secondary contact for the news media in the absence of the Operations Lieutenant.
      - (3) Other Employees
        - (a) The Chief of Police or Operations Lieutenant may direct other employees to respond to media inquiries on a case-by-case basis.
    - b. The Shift Sergeant shall be responsible for ensuring that the Operations Lieutenant is informed of major incidents and all other events that are likely to generate media interest.

### 4.02 PROCEDURES

- A. Media Inquires
  - 1. The Department shall respond to all media inquiries in a timely and professional manner.
  - 2. Media inquiries shall be directed to the Operations Lieutenant.
  - 3. In the absence of the Operations Lieutenant, media inquiries should be directed to the Investigative Supervisor, and finally to the on-duty Sergeant if neither the Operations Lieutenant nor the Investigative Supervisor are available.
- B. Interviews
  - 1. The Operations Lieutenant shall be responsible for assisting the news media by conducting interviews or coordinating interviews with other qualified agency personnel.
  - 2. Members contacted directly by the media shall notify the Operations Lieutenant of any interview requests prior to making any statement related to the Department, cases under investigation, or cases formerly under investigation by the Department.
  - 3. All conversations with members of the news media should be considered "on the record" and subject to being quoted.
- C. News Releases/Press Releases

1. News or press releases shall be written and disseminated to the media and Department members on major incidents and events of community interest or concern.
  2. All news or press releases should be approved by the Chief of Police or the Operations Lieutenant or their designee and the designated Town Public Information Officer prior to dissemination.
- D. New Conferences
1. News conferences shall be held only in connection with major events of concern to the community.
  2. The Chief of Police shall be informed of all news conferences.
  3. The Operations Lieutenant, in conjunction with the designated Town Public Information Officer, shall facilitate the news conference, which may include the Chief of Police or their designee.
- E. Access to Crime Scenes and Critical Incidents
1. At crime scenes, Department members shall ensure that the media respect the established perimeter. Members of the media shall receive no more or less access to an incident scene than members of the general public.
  2. The Operations Lieutenant, with approval of the scene supervisor, may grant closer access to the media and their equipment as long as it does not interfere with or hinder law enforcement operations.
  3. Department members shall not prohibit the media from news-gathering practices, including photography and interviews, outside the established perimeter.
  4. Only the Operations Lieutenant or their designee shall release information to the news media at crime and critical incident scenes.
  5. At critical incident scenes, the Operations Lieutenant or their designee shall establish a media briefing area as close to the scene as safety and operational requirements allow.
  6. At critical incident scenes, Department members shall work in close cooperation with the media to ensure that live broadcasts do not disclose any information that could endanger law enforcement personnel or the general public.
- F. Public Records
1. The Department and its members shall abide by all Local, State and Federal laws governing the release of public records.
- G. Access to Suspects
1. Department members shall not intentionally pose any suspect or person in-custody for photographs/video or make them available for media interviews.
  2. This policy does not prohibit the media, when participating on a ride-a-long, from taking photographs/videos in common areas normally open to the public.
- H. Joint Investigations or Operations Involving another Agency
1. In a multijurisdictional investigation, the lead Investigative Agency is responsible for providing or coordinating the release of public information.
    - a. In the event the Department is the lead agency, the Operations Lieutenant will share information with all involved agencies in advance of public disseminations, when practical.
- I. Public Service Announcements or Advertisements
1. Public service announcements or advertisements shall be approved by the Operations Lieutenant prior to public discussion.

#### 4.03 INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES

- A. The release of information is subject to restrictions placed by applicable Local, State, and Federal Laws. No member of the Department shall release any information which would compromise the successful conclusion of an investigation or jeopardize the safety of affected persons.
- B. Authorized Department members can release the following information:
  - 1. Basic information about a crime or incident
  - 2. Basic information about victims, except as excluded by law
  - 3. Descriptions of suspects
  - 4. Basic description of weapons and vehicles used
  - 5. Basic description of stolen items
  - 6. Basic description of injuries and condition of victims
  - 7. The name, age, and other basic information about adult arrestees and the charges against them
  - 8. Information contained in arrest affidavits and other public court documents
  - 9. Booking photographs
- C. Department members shall not release the following information:
  - 1. Names, addresses, and any other information that would identify the victim of any sexual assault crime
  - 2. Names, addresses, and any other information that would identify the victim of any juvenile victims
  - 3. Names, addresses, and any other information that would identify a juvenile arrestees, as governed by State Law
  - 4. Names, addresses, and any other information that would identify the suspect or charged individual of any sexual assault crime, unless otherwise allowed under Wyo. Stat. Ann. § 6-2-319
  - 5. Active criminal investigative information, active criminal intelligence information, and surveillance techniques
  - 6. Names of informants and information provided by them
  - 7. Supplemental or investigative reports until the case is closed or the Investigative Supervisor deems it permissible
  - 8. Any internal affairs investigations or any matter that is being investigated as a personnel matter by the Department or the Town
  - 9. Names, addresses, and any other information that would identify a witness
  - 10. The identity of critically injured or deceased persons prior to notification of next-of-kin
  - 11. Home address, telephone numbers, and any family related information of Department members
  - 12. Names of undercover members
  - 13. Any other information that could jeopardize the successful conclusion of an investigation and prosecution
  - 14. Any other information prohibited by State Law from public disclosure

#### 4.04 MEDIA CREDENTIALS

- A. This Department acknowledges representatives from recognized media organizations who are affiliated with the Associated Press or the Wyoming Press Association which carry and display photographic identification issued by their employer.

- B. All others shall be considered a member of the general public and not a legitimate member of the press until determined otherwise.

**4.05 ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION**

- A. It is the policy of this Department to pursue alternative methods of disseminating information directly to the public.
- B. These methods may include but are not limited to:
  - 1. Web Sites
  - 2. NIXLE Releases
  - 3. Social Media Outlets
  - 4. Public Appearances by Department members
  - 5. Any other means approved of by the Chief of Police or the Operations Lieutenant