


PBP FORM 290  PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF POLICE <i>"...accountability, integrity and respect."</i>		SUBJECT: "MEDIA POLICY"	ORDER NUMBER: 65-1
		PLEAC STANDARD: NONE	PAGE 1 OF 3
ISSUE DATE: 03/06/2015	EFFECTIVE DATE: 03/06/2015	ANNUAL REVIEW DATE: MARCH	RESCINDS: ALL PREVIOUS
AMENDS:			

1.0 POLICY/PURPOSE:

- 1.1 It shall be the policy of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police to actively seek the establishment of a cooperative and effective relationship with the news media that balances the rights and needs of the news media and the public to obtain information with the need of the PBP to conduct thorough and effective investigations and operations.
- 1.2 This General Order establishes guidelines regarding media relations and the release of information to the public through all approved means of media distribution.
- 1.3 No employee shall release any information that would jeopardize an active investigation, prejudice an accused's right to a fair trial, or violate any law. Certain information must be withheld to protect the Constitutional rights of the accused, to avoid interfering with Bureau Investigations, or because it is legally privileged.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

- 2.1 **Public Information Officer (PIO)** – A member of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police (PBP), or the City of Pittsburgh Department of Public Safety (DPS), who is assigned the duties and responsibilities of interacting with outside media sources, ~~is~~ releasing information regarding police related incidents, and ~~to~~ promoting the mission of the PBP and the City of Pittsburgh DPS.
- 2.2 **Approved Member** – A member of the PBP who has been given authority via the PIO, his/her supervisor, or this policy to interact with outside media sources. Supervisors may only grant approval to release information on issues that are within the scope of that supervisor's control (i.e. if a supervisor is not authorized to talk about an ongoing homicide investigation with the media, then that supervisor can not approve a subordinate to talk to the media about the same homicide investigation). Generally, an approved member will be a Zone Commander speaking about an incident in his/her Zone, a Specialty Commander speaking about an incident that his/her personnel are investigating, the Duty Commander, or an Assistant Chief, but this responsibility may, at times, fall to a Zone Shift Supervisor.

2.0 GENERAL REGULATIONS REGARDING RELEASE OF INFORMATION

- 2.1 Members or employees of the Bureau of Police **shall not** disclose the following information regarding a crime, a suspect, a victim, and/or a prisoner:
 - 2.1.1 The criminal history of the accused;
 - 2.1.2 Statements that the accused has confessed, or implicated him/herself or another party, or characterize the case in terms of a strong one, etc;
 - 2.1.3 Statements that the accused has made no statement;
 - 2.1.4 Statements that reveal the identity or credibility of witnesses;
 - 2.1.5 Statements that reveal the identity of the victim(s);
 - 2.1.6 Statements that reveal the results of any tests or forensic evidence, including but not limited to DNA, breathalyzer, polygraph, and/or fingerprint analysis;
 - 2.1.7 Comment regarding a possible plea; and
 - 2.1.8 Give an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the suspect.
 - 2.1.9 Members should be aware that their affidavit of probable cause is public information and is made available to the media. Members should not list the above information in their affidavit unless the member feels that it is necessary for the affidavit's approval.

- 2.2 Generally, an approved member of the PBP may disclose the following relevant information regarding a crime, a prisoner, or a suspect:
- 2.2.1 The date, time, and location of the incident;
 - 2.2.2 A brief synopsis of the incident, remembering to be very careful not to reveal sensitive information;
 - 2.2.3 The identity of the suspect(s)/prisoner(s);
 - 2.2.2 The identity of the investigating/arresting officer(s);
 - 2.2.3 The length of the investigation; and
 - 2.2.4 That the officer may request assistance in obtaining evidence.
- 2.3 In any unusual situations and/or major arrests, officers shall refer the news media to the Public Information Officer (PIO) or the supervisor of the Division involved. A written statement regarding the incident may be issued by the PIO in order to avoid the possibility of misquotes or misunderstandings as to what was released.
- 2.4 A member shall not interfere with the news media members who are observing or taking pictures in public portions of buildings, on the street, in public places, or anywhere outside of the established perimeter. When the news media personnel are in a position or location which endangers their own safety, the safety of other people in the area, ~~themselves and/or others~~ or interferes with police action, they should be warned that they are in danger and advised to move to a safer location. If the media members refuse to move, they shall be warned that they are subject to criminal charges if they do not move from their location.
- 2.5 News media personnel shall not be permitted access to non-public areas of PBP duty locations for the purpose of photographing or interviewing an arrested person.
- 2.6 Members shall not subject any prisoner in PBP custody to being posed for pictures except as needed for official law enforcement processing.
- 2.7 Partiality will not be shown toward any member of the media.
- 2.8 A member of the PBP may decline to be interviewed on camera or audio recording. However, supervisors shall be prepared to release approved information regarding incidents. Media personnel may be referred to a higher ranking member in a courteous manner, in keeping with the professional standards of the Bureau of Police.
- 2.9 Any interviews or information released to the media by an approved member regarding any incident must be reported to the PIO in a timely manner.
- 2.9.1 Interviews with the media regarding Bureau related subject matter by members other than those specifically authorized by this order must be approved by the PIO or the appropriate Assistant Chief of Police.
- 2.10 The Zone Commander is responsible to ensure PIO is notified of incidents in his/her Zone that garner media attention, so that an appropriate release of information can be prepared and provided.
- 2.11 Members shall not make "off the record" comments to the media about an ongoing investigation.
- 3.0 HANDLING OF INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION**
- 3.1 From the initial stage of a criminal investigation until the final disposition of the case, members shall refer all requests for information to the PIO. The PIO will, in turn, consult with the investigating branch to determine what information is appropriate to release in that particular instance.
- 3.2 If, at any time, a member feels that media attention to a certain event would jeopardize an investigation or public safety, he/she should contact the PIO immediately. The PIO will contact the news director of the respective news agency and request that, in the interest of public safety or investigative integrity, the story not be run.
- 3.3 The Assistant Chief of Investigations, the Commander of Major Crimes, or other approved member(s) will address all questions regarding homicide investigations. The Assistant Chief of Investigations or the Commander of Major Crimes may call a media conference.

- 3.3.1 As soon as practical after the conference, the Assistant Chief of Investigations or the Commander of Major crimes shall brief either the PIO or the Chief of Police as to what occurred at the conference.
- 3.4 At the scene of an atypical event, such as a critical incident, all media inquiries will be referred to the PIO through the Incident Commander.
- 3.5 The Chief of Police or his/her designee will handle all media inquiries regarding a critical incident involving a member of the PBP.
- 3.6 With the exception of Critical Incidents and Major Crimes investigations, an Approved Member should provide the date, time and location of the incident and the basic facts of the incident to the media as soon as is practical, and in accordance with this policy.
- 3.6.1 The Shift Supervisor shall ensure that the PIO is notified of any incident for which they provided information to the media, to ensure continuity in the release of information.

4.0 REVIEW OF POLICE REPORTS

- 4.1 Credentialed members of the news media may review the PBP Form #2.0, Offense/Incident Report and the zone arrest log (not to include the juvenile arrest log).
- 4.2 Release of any other copies of police reports or investigative materials shall be coordinated with the approval of the Assistant Chief of Investigations or the Chief of Police, as required by State and Federal laws and in accordance with PBP policies and guidelines.

Approved By:

Cameron McLay
Chief of Police

Date