

BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

MEDIA POLICY

Reviewed by: Ofc. Sara Mayer	Effective Date: April 6, 1990
Authorized by: Asst. Chief Gregory Scott	Revision Date: February 1, 2017

PURPOSE

The purpose of this SOP is to establish guidelines for release and dissemination of public information to print, broadcast, and online news media.

POLICY

The policy of the Bloomington Police Department is to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual public information pertaining to activities of this Department as long as those media efforts do not unduly interfere with police department operations, infringe upon individual's rights, or violate the law. Cooperation between the Police Department and the media should occur in ways that protect freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the rights of the accused to a fair trial, and unbiased coverage by the press.

PROCEDURE

The Police Department shall promptly release accurate and factual information following an incident. The first release may be very brief. However, as additional information is gathered, every attempt should be made to inform the news media of additional details.

Guidelines for response to media inquiries:

1. The Public Affairs Officer shall have primary responsibility for assisting the media in covering newsworthy incidents.
2. Once the Public Affairs Officer or their designated back-up have been notified of an incident, ALL information regarding the incident from that point on will be generated and disseminated to the media through the Public Affairs Office. If the Public Affairs Officer or their designated back-up is unavailable, the Chief or an Assistant Chief, Shift Supervisor, or their designee may release pertinent information to the media. The Public Affairs Officer, when distributing information, shall use a media release template (that contains the Police Department's shield, contact names and phone numbers, a release date and time), the Police Department's social media platforms, e-mail, telephone, fax machine, and/or any combination thereof.
3. **NO** Bloomington Police Department employee – with the exception of the Public Affairs Officer, their designated back-up, or Shift Supervisor -- may make an immediate, oral response to on-the-scene, in-person or telephone inquiries concerning their respective division's activities. All inquiries shall be directed to the shift supervisor.

4. Information contained on the Media report printed from EJS shall follow the guidelines outlined in this Media Policy. A copy of the Media report printed from EJS shall be available to the media upon request with the following exceptions:
 - a. Reports being withheld by the Coroner's Office, pending notification of the next of kin;
 - b. Felony offense reports, until the investigation is past any sensitive state that may temporarily exist;
 - c. Investigative Supplementary Reports, which are not to be made available to the media under any circumstance.
5. When an individual is arrested, the following information must be made available to the news media for inspection and copying:
 - a. Information that identifies the individual, including name, age, and address when and if available unless such information is to be withheld by court order;
 - b. Information detailing any charges relating to the arrest. **NO** information should be released regarding grand jury deliberations (including witnesses appearing, testimony, the voting of a true bill, etc.) until an indictment is released (see 725 ILCS 5/112-6);
 - c. The time and place of arrest;
 - d. A request for assistance from the public in obtaining evidence and information. If the accused has not been apprehended, information necessary to aid in the apprehension of that person is allowed (i.e. photograph and/or identifiable characteristics of the accused);
 - e. A warning of danger concerning the behavior of a person involved, when there is reason to believe that there exists the likelihood of substantial harm to an individual or the public interest;
 - f. The name of the investigating or arresting law enforcement agency.
 - g. If the individual is incarcerated, the time and date that the individual was received, discharged, or transferred from the arresting agency's custody.
6. The information required by this Section must be made available to the news media for inspection and copying as soon as practicable, but in no event shall the time period exceed 72 hours from the arrest, unless disclosure would
 - a. interfere with pending or actually and reasonably contemplated law enforcement proceedings conducted by any law enforcement officer;
 - b. endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement or correctional personnel; or any other person
 - c. or compromise the security of any correctional facility.

Information that **IS NOT** released to the media:

1. The name, date of birth, telephone numbers, personal email addresses, and residential address of the victim (only city and state can be released to the media), unless the address is the location of the crime.
2. The names of minors arrested or taken into custody before their 18th birthday in accordance with the provisions of 705 ILCS 405 (Juvenile Court Act.)
3. The name, date of birth, telephone numbers, personal email addresses, and and/or address of non-police witnesses.
4. The character, credibility, reputation, or criminal record of a witness or suspect in a criminal investigation, or the identity of a witness or the expected testimony of a witness.

5. The possibility of a plea of guilty to the offense or the existence or contents of any confession, admission, or statement (including alibis) given by a defendant or suspect, or the person's failure to make a statement.
6. The performance or results of any examination or test, the failure or refusal of a person to submit to an examination or test, or the nature of the physical evidence expected to be presented at trial.
7. Any opinion as to the guilt or innocence of a defendant or suspect.
8. Reference to evidentiary matters, including fingerprints, polygraph examinations, ballistic tests, laboratory tests, and the amount of money taken in bank and business robberies, whether in specific or general amounts.
9. Reference to investigative procedures, including surveillance techniques, operational specifics of covert activities, or other information which may compromise current or future investigative activities.

No preferential treatment will be afforded any representative of the media. This statement will not be construed to prohibit initiative reporting, nor does it require notifying all media prior to the release of information requested by a reporter.

Members of the department who are authorized to give information to the media must exercise care, common sense and discretion to avoid rendering statements or information which, if quoted, may create a misunderstanding or compromise the effectiveness of the department. Any member speaking to the media about an incident shall have personal knowledge of that incident, which should be based on a review of the reports filed by officers investigating the incident. Statements made to members of the media should not reflect personal opinions.

Media interviews arranged by authorized employees of the Police Department, if conducted at the Police Department, shall be done only in those parts of the building that are available to the general public. Efforts should be made to prevent media from intentionally or inadvertently gaining access to potentially sensitive information that may be contained in documents on desks or posted on walls in secured areas of the building.

Official positions of the Department, official responses to criticism of the Department, information relating to internal matters, and statements pertaining to pending or ongoing civil litigation involving the Department shall be the exclusive responsibility of the Police Administration or their designee.

Members of the news media shall not be allowed access to any area, public or private, if the possibility exists that evidence may be damaged, destroyed, or altered.

Members of the news media shall not be allowed access to any area wherein such access would jeopardize the life of, or present the substantial possibility of injury to, any department personnel, any citizen, or any media personnel.

When the media are in public places or places where the press may otherwise lawfully be, no member of the Department shall take any action to prevent or interfere with photographing or televising an event, a thing, or a person. However, actions by photographers and/or television camera operators that interfere with legitimate police activities shall not be allowed.

The Police Department has no authority to allow the media access to private property, nor shall the Police Department disallow access, except for legitimate law enforcement purposes. Members of the media need the consent of the owner or agent of the private property to be on said property.

Members of the Department shall not pose a suspect or accused person for photographs, nor shall they pose with the subject for the media. Department photographs of a suspect may be released if a valid law enforcement function is served and providing the photograph will not jeopardize an investigation.