

# COLUMBUS POLICE DEPARTMENT



## General Order 54: Public Information

CALEA Standards: 54.1.3  
Replaces: December 10, 2013  
Effective date: December 19, 2017

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## 54.1 Public Information

### 54.1.1 Activities

- A. Being a department spokesperson holds a great deal of responsibility, as the comments made represent the position and view of the entire department, and sometimes even the City of Columbus. The Chief of Police has the ultimate responsibility for public comments concerning the Columbus Police Department. However, the Public Relations Officer is designated as the primary departmental spokesperson unless otherwise dictated by the Chief of Police.
1. Rules and regulations regarding public statements, social media, appearances and endorsements are governed by General Order 26.
  2. Any employee wishing to release information to the media shall immediately make a request to the Public Relations Officer or his/her designee for approval.
  3. Employees should inform the Public Relations Officer or his/her designee of newsworthy events. Employees are encouraged to take a proactive approach in supplying this information. If there is doubt about making notification, officers should err on the side of making the notification.
  4. If the Public Relations Officer is going to be unavailable for notification, he/she will inform the Chief of Police, and employees will be given instruction on whom to contact.
- B. Media coverage of police activity is a basic requirement for an informed public. It is the responsibility of the Public Relations Officer or his/her designee to provide the media and the public with timely information concerning appropriate police matters occurring within the City of Columbus. IC 5-14-3-5 requires certain information be made available not later than twenty-four (24) hours after the suspected crime, accident, or complaint has been reported to the agency.
1. Details that have not been confirmed shall not be released, and no speculative comments should be made.
  2. Undercover officers shall remain unidentified.
  3. Release of a cause of death should be coordinated with the County Coroner or the deceased person's attending physician.
  4. The release of information should be coordinated with the lead investigator prior to making a release.

5. Members of the news media shall not be allowed inside designated secured crime scenes, and no modification to crime scene boundaries are authorized without the expressed approval of the person in charge of the crime scene.
6. Officers should not attempt to stop members of the media from taking photographs or gathering information as long as they are in a location where they are entitled to be.

#### 54.1.3 Media Access

- A. In the event of any critical incident or other highly publicized event, the Incident Commander or the person in charge of the incident will establish a command post, establish a media staging area, and request the assistance of the Public Relations Officer or his/her designee. The Public Relations Officer or his/her designee will relay information to the media from this staging area. All officers are responsible for controlling media access at locations where such access would interfere with law enforcement operations.
  1. The Public Relations Officer or his/her designee should inform members of the media that they are not to interfere with the response of emergency personnel at the scene, while still providing the media with essential information.
  2. The Public Relations Officer or his/her designee shall not show any one member of the media favoritism.
- B. In routine police events, the Public Relations Officer or his/her designee may assign the role of public information officer to another officer.

Acceptance by Columbus Police Department Captain's Board:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jonathan L. Rohde, Chief

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Matthew Todd Harry, Deputy Chief

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sandy LaBarbera, Chief's Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Richardson, Uniform Captain

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brian Wilder, Administrative Captain

Acceptance by Columbus Board of Public Works and Safety:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Lienhoop, Mayor

Attest:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mary Ferdon, Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Luann Welmer, Clerk-Treasurer

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John Pickett, Member

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Jim Strietelmeier, Member

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Brenda Sullivan, Member

Acceptance by Columbus Police Department Captain's Board:


Date: 12-18-2017

  
Jonathan L. Rohde, Chief

Attest:

  
Matthew Todd Harry, Deputy Chief

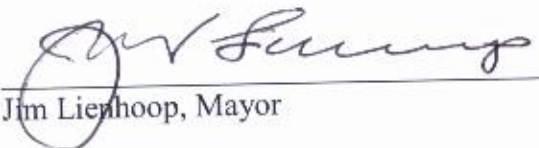
  
Sandy LaBarbera, Chief's Secretary

  
Michael Richardson, Uniform Captain

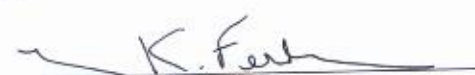
  
Brian Wilder, Administrative Captain


Acceptance by Columbus Board of Public Works and Safety:

Date: 12/19/2017

  
Jim Lienhoop, Mayor

Attest:

  
Mary Ferdon, Member

  
Luann Welmer, Clerk-Treasurer

  
John Pickett, Member

  
Jim Strietelmeier, Member

  
Brenda Sullivan, Member