



**POLICE DEPARTMENT COUNTY OF SUFFOLK**  
 ACCREDITED LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY  
**DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE**  
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**ORDER NUMBER 13-58**

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SUBJECT/TOPIC/TITLE MEDIA RELATIONS				
DISTRIBUTION ALL MEMBERS OF THE DEPARTMENT	SECTION CREATED 06/1/92	DATE EFFECTIVE 06/25/13	DATE AMENDED 06/25/13	

**RULES AND PROCEDURES**

**CHAPTER 26: TITLE: COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

**SECTION 2: TITLE: MEDIA RELATIONS**

**I. PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines for interacting with and releasing information to the media.

**II. POLICY**

The Suffolk County Police Department is committed to working cooperatively with the media to keep the public informed. It is the policy of this department to maintain a strong spirit of cooperation and openness with the media and the public served. An informed public is better equipped to deal with current trends and patterns of activity and to evaluate the activities and effectiveness of the Police Department.

It is recognized that in most instances the objectives of the Police Department and the media are the same, informing and educating the public regarding matters affecting them. To this end, all members of the Department shall foster a positive, professional relationship with the media.

While the Department is committed to informing the public about events it is handling or involved in, the Department is also responsible to ensure the dissemination of information will not interfere with the rights of victims, hinder an investigation or impair a defendant's right to a fair trial.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

A. Recorded Media - Still photographs, video and audio

recordings in any format.

**IV. REFERENCE**

N/A

**V. RULES AND REGULATIONS**

N/A

**VI. PROCEDURES**

A. All members of the Suffolk County Police Department shall work cooperatively with members of the media.

B. Department members are professional and courteous in their dealings with members of the media.

C. Members of the media shall not be precluded from observing incidents, producing recorded media and commenting regarding an incident, provided they do so from locations that are open to the public.

D. Although preferable, members of the media are not required to possess or display media identification cards, press passes or other forms of identification in locations open to the public.

E. Press cards and/or passes issued by the Nassau County Police Department and New York City Police Department are valid in Suffolk County.

Note: It must be remembered that "public access equals media access," regardless of the subject matter to be observed. Members of the media cannot be restricted from entering and/or producing recorded media from areas that are open to the public, regardless of subject matter, including plainclothes and/or undercover operations that are conducted in public view.

1. Department members will attempt to identify members of the media who have produced recorded media containing plainclothes and/or undercover operations or personnel. The Department member shall request the member of the media not release portions of the media containing sensitive plainclothes and/or undercover operations, or that the identity of the plainclothes/undercover

personnel be electronically concealed/blurred prior to dissemination.

2. Department members will immediately notify the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau of the aforementioned situation and a representative from the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will immediately contact the respective media outlet to reiterate said request.

F. Supervisors-in-charge of significant police incidents and/or crime scenes shall promptly request that a representative from the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau respond to the scene to assist Department members and the media in fulfilling their joint expectations.

G. Media Access at Crime Scenes and Other Incidents

1. Media representatives who possess and display a valid Suffolk County Police News Media Identification Card, or a Nassau County or New York City Police Press Pass, may be granted access beyond the outer perimeter of crime scenes and other incidents contingent upon the following guidelines:

a. The bearer of the card or press pass, upon the approval of the officer-in-charge, may pass outer perimeter lines at crash scenes.

b. The ranking patrol or detective supervisor-in-charge of the scene may direct members of the media to a designated media area inside the outer perimeter. Media personnel are not permitted within the designated inner-perimeter of a scene.

1. Supervisors-in-charge at significant scenes should make every reasonable effort to establish designated media areas within outer perimeters, but outside of inner perimeters.

c. When members of the Department are in control of a private dwelling, private area or other areas generally not opened to the public, permission must be obtained from the person having authority over such premises, as well as from the officer-in-charge, before members of the media are permitted

in or on the property.

d. Media representatives shall not be allowed to enter areas of extreme and imminent danger (Example: immediate vicinity of a burning propane tanker). Media representatives shall not be precluded from entering areas that are open to the public.

e. If an incident garners national attention and media outlets do not have press credentials from the Suffolk County Police Department, the Nassau County Police Department or the New York City Police Department, the media member will be required to show identification proving they are legitimate members of the press. If a question of legitimacy arises, contact the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau.

H. Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau

1. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau disseminates information through the media and acts as liaison between the Department and the media. Information is provided equally to all media outlets, and is not, nor shall not be withheld or delayed in order to favor any particular media representative or agency.

2. A member of the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall respond to the scene of serious police incidents to assist Department members and the media in fulfilling their joint responsibilities. Questions regarding department policy concerning the media shall be directed to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau.

3. Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau members will assist the media in resolving problems of mutual concern. Members of the Department shall immediately notify the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau of conflicts and/or concerns that arise with the media. Members of the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau are authorized and shall immediately assist with resolving real-time police/media conflicts by conferring with the on-scene supervisor to produce an appropriate resolution.

a. Concerns from Department members regarding the media shall be brought to the attention of the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau through the Department member's chain-of-command. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall investigate the allegation and shall discuss the matter with the media representative and his/her organization, if necessary. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will advise the concerned Department member of the outcome in a timely manner.

I. Newsworthy Information

1. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau, as well as all supervisory personnel, shall be cognizant of the role and responsibility of the media to obtain information for dissemination to the public. All officers-in-charge shall make available to members of the media, via the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau, information pertaining to newsworthy incidents, including the release of information regarding crimes.

2. To facilitate the coordinated dissemination of accurate information, there should be only one Department spokesman for incidents and/or crimes.

J. Notification to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau

1. All department supervisors, and in the absence of a supervisor the detective-in-charge of an investigation, shall, without unnecessary delay, transmit details of newsworthy matters to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau. The following types of incidents are considered newsworthy and shall be reported to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau:

- a. Robbery, kidnapping and other major crimes
- b. Arrests made in major investigations
- c. Missing children younger than 10 years of age
- d. Serious automobile crashes

- e. Incidents resulting in accidental deaths or serious injuries
- f. Suicides (so that the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau can advise media and minimize media interest)
- g. All homicides and attempted homicides
- h. Natural deaths if deceased of notable persons.
- i. Police-involved shootings that result in injury
- j. Fires causing considerable damage, or involving structures of community or historical significance
- k. Rescues made by members of the Department
- l. Details of any other event or occurrence of unusual nature (explosions, riots, mass arrests, bombing, hazardous material spill, found or detonated explosive devices, etc.)

2. Supplementary information/updates shall be promptly provided to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau as conditions permit. If the Detective Division assumes control of a scene, information regarding the scene or investigation shall only be released by the detective supervisor or, in the absence of a supervisor, the detective-in-charge.

3. Communications Section supervisors shall promptly notify the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau of newsworthy events or occurrences.

4. Ranking patrol or detective supervisors present and/or in charge of a major police incident or investigation shall ensure that the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau is promptly notified.

5. Notable investigations for other law enforcement agencies will be reported to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau without unnecessary delay by the detective supervisor responsible for the investigation. In the absence of a detective supervisor, the detective-in-charge of the investigation shall make said notification.

6. Patrol division supervisors and members of the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will not release information on incidents being investigated by the Detective Division without authorization of the detective supervisor or, in the absence of a supervisor, the detective-in-charge.

7. When significant new information or information that is substantially different from what was included in the original news release is to be released, the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall be immediately notified.

#### K. Release of Information

1. The Police Commissioner shall be named as the issuing authority on all news releases.

2. The officer-in-charge of a newsworthy incident or, in the case of a criminal investigation, the detective supervisor or, in the absence of a supervisor, the detective-in-charge, is responsible to ensure that sufficient factual information for a news release is provided to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will prepare the release and send a final draft for the supervisor's approval.

3. The scope and content of each release of information, whether written or oral, must be determined on a case-by-case basis. Generally, a description of the circumstances that is not privileged and will not prejudice the safety of victims or witnesses, or the rights of suspects, will be released.

4. All media inquiries not related to an issued press release or a developing situation must be immediately referred to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau. Department members who are in possession of sufficient facts may supply information on non-criminal matters (life-saving efforts, crashes, traffic problems, etc.). Requests for information on criminal matters or investigations shall only be answered by the Department member-in-charge of an investigation or his/her designee.

5. Questions pertaining to Department policy shall be referred to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau.

6. Department members shall be open in dealing with the public. Unless there is reason to withhold information consistent with these guidelines, members shall supply appropriately requested information.

7. Department members shall not represent as fact that which is opinion while speaking as a representative of the Department.

8. In all deaths, the identity of the deceased shall be withheld from the media until the next of kin has been notified or until a reasonable effort has been made to make said notification.

9. Information regarding a Department member who is involved in an incident related to or resulting in the death of an individual, including an in-custody death, shall be released to the media only at the direction of the Police Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee. Information released shall be limited to the member's age, race, command assignment, number of years of service, and the number and type of substantiated complaints made against the member.

10. All Freedom of Information Law (FOIL) requests and requests for statistics from members of the media must be promptly forwarded to the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau.

11. Notifications to the media about Department initiatives and/or events must be cleared by the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau.

L. Release of Information in Joint Operations

1. It shall be the responsibility of the lead agency to release information to the media during joint operations involving other agencies. Each agency involved in the joint operation should agree, at the appropriate time, as to which agency will handle news releases. The release shall be coordinated with the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau when this department is the lead agency.



M. Requests for Interview by the Media

1. No Department member shall speak to the media about a developing situation before first contacting the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will be fully appraised regarding developing situations as expeditiously as possible to facilitate media requests. After the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau has been notified of a situation, the Command may be authorized to field media inquiries. All Commands shall make every effort to notify the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau regarding developing situations as expeditiously as possible.

a. Department members interviewed by a representative of the media shall immediately notify the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau of the occurrence and content of the interview.

2. Requests from the media for in-studio interviews, special feature stories, etc., will be approved by appropriate Commanding Officers. Prior to the Commanding Officer's approval, the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will be notified, and when applicable, will coordinate these requests.

N. Guidelines/Release of Information Regarding Criminal Cases

1. The following guidelines, based upon the recommendations of the New York Fair Trial Free Press Conference, shall be adhered to by members of the Department.

a. The following information should be released:

(1) Prior to Arrest -

(a) When a crime is believed to have been committed, pertinent facts relating to the crime itself may be made available. The details of investigative procedure will not be disclosed, except to the extent necessary to assist in the

apprehension of the suspect, to warn the public of any dangers or to otherwise aid in the investigation.

(2) After Arrest -

(a) Members may release the accused's name, age, residence, employment, marital status and similar background information. The identity of juvenile offenders (J.O.) will be released only upon the approval of the commanding officer of the processing Detective command or designee.

(b) Members may release the substance of the text of the charge, such as complaint, indictment, information and where appropriate, the identity of the complainant.

NOTE: Names of complainants who are under 16 years of age WILL NOT be released.

(c) Members may release the identity of the investigating and arresting agency and the length of the investigation.

(d) Members may release the circumstances immediately surrounding the arrest, including the time and place of arrest, resistance, pursuit, possession and use of weapons and a description of items seized at the time of arrest.

b. The following information should not be released:

(1) Do not reveal any information regarding the fact that the arrestee led officers to weapons, money or other material evidence.

(2) Do not reveal any information regarding the arrestee taking any tests or refusing to take any test, such as a Polygraph test,

except you may do so when the arrest is for DWI or DWAI (drugs).

NOTE: You may reveal whether or not the arrestee submitted to any chemical tests, or refused to submit to such tests, but do not release results of chemical tests except to the arrestee and his or her legal counsel.

(3) Do not release any information about the existence or contents of any confession, admission statements, or alibi given by the arrestee or his or her refusal to make a confession, admission, statement or alibi.

(4) Do not discuss your opinion of the guilt or innocence of the arrestee.

(5) Do not release the identity of any prospective witness or comment on his/her credibility or anticipated testimony.

(6) Do not release any information that is speculative, such as the possibility of a guilty plea, or a plea to a lesser offense, or any other disposition.

(7) Do not release the names of any civilian complainants initiating the charges when this may pose any danger to the complainants.

(8) Do not release the name of the victim of a sex crime.

(9) Do not pose an arrestee for media representatives to videotape or take still pictures.

NOTE: Media may take pictures or video in any public place such as a prisoner walking from precinct to prisoner van.

(10) Do not refer to the arrestee as a "known gangster", "depraved character" or any other derogatory term.

## O. Guidelines for Release of Photographs to Media

1. Release Policy - Under normal circumstances, the release of photographs of arrestees to the media is permissible unless:

a. The release is premature in that distribution of the photograph to the media may compromise victim(s) or witness(es) identification of the accused in a line-up.

b. The release poses a potential threat to anyone's safety.

c. The release has the potential to jeopardize an active investigation.

d. The photographic negative(s) of the arrestee are unavailable for reproduction. Photographic negative(s) are not available if they are not yet in the possession of the Identification Section, or if the arrestee's records may not be lawfully released.

2. Priority Change - The Police Commissioner may authorize a change in priority to facilitate the processing of requests for photographs from the media, if he/she deems it necessary.

3. Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau Involvement - All requests for photographs of arrestees by a media representative will be handled by the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau. All other requests for photographs shall be handled by the Identification Section.

4. Release Procedure

a. Upon request by a media representative for a photograph of an arrestee, the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall ensure that the tenets of the Freedom of Information Act are adhered to.

b. Regardless of the number of representatives from each media organization requesting a photograph, only one from each firm shall be routinely provided with a photograph upon request.

c. In answering the request, the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall contact the commanding officer of the appropriate investigating officers/detectives to determine whether the release of requested photograph(s) would interfere with an ongoing investigation.

d. If no impediments to the release of the photograph(s) are found, the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall contact the commanding officer of the Identification Section, or designee. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will advise of any deadlines that must be met by the media representative and inquire as to when the photograph(s) can be ready for release.

e. The commanding officer of the Identification Section, or designee, will advise the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau of any delays anticipated in fulfilling the request by the media deadline. An estimate as to when the photograph(s) will be ready for release shall be provided.

f. If the Identification Section cannot provide the requested photograph(s) by the media deadline, the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will inform the media representative and advise them of the estimated time of release.

g. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall attempt to arrange for a compatible release time or date in the event that the Identification Section does not anticipate meeting the media deadline.

h. If the anticipated photographic release time is compatible with the media representative's deadline, a Request for Photos form (PDCS 3230-4) will be completed to initiate processing. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall fill out the form, noting the requestor's name, media organization affiliation, business mailing address, and phone number. This form shall be forwarded to the Identification Section for

processing.

i. Identification Section staff members must ensure that current records are consulted to ascertain that the existing materials concerning the arrestee may be lawfully released.

j. If, at any time during the processing of the request, the Identification Section discovers any bars to provision of the photograph(s), the commanding officer of the Identification Section, or designee, shall promptly notify the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau.

k. Negatives of photographs requested by the media that are available for reproduction in the Identification Section shall be located, reproduced, and re-filed with the white copy of the Request for Photos form retained per guidelines in the Identification Section's files.

l. If more than one photographic negative of an arrestee may be lawfully released, only the most recently taken image shall be reproduced. In the event that a set of photographic negatives from the most recent date exists, the commanding officer of the Identification Section shall choose one to reproduce for the media.

m. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau shall retain and file the yellow copy of the Request for Photos form returned with the photographs for the media. These copies shall be kept in a file within their office for a period of time determined by the commanding officer.

P. Release of Prior Criminal Records

1. Prior criminal convictions are matters of public record and are available to the media. Media representatives should request such records from the Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau. The Crime Stoppers and Public Information Bureau will coordinate with the investigating command before release of such information.

Q. Information from Central Records

1. Information released from the Central Records Section is only released as outlined in the procedures applying to that section.

R. Communications Section Supervisor Notification

1. The Communications Section supervisor is informed of all newsworthy data as is practical as outlined in Section M.

**VII. ACCREDITATION REFERENCE**

A. CALEA 54.1.1, 54.1.2, 54.1.3, 54.1.4, 54.1.5.  
54.1.7, 54.1.9, 54.1.10, 54.1.11

B. NYSLEAP 28.1, 28.2, 28.3

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