

## Criminal Cases

### Do not...

- Release that the arrestee led officers to weapons, money or other material evidence.
- Release information regarding the arrestee taking any tests or refusing to take any test, such as a polygraph test, except you may release that the arrestee took or refused tests for DWI or DWAI (drugs). **Do not release test results.**
- Release the existence or content of any confession, admission, statement or alibis.
- Discuss your opinion regarding the guilt or innocence of the arrestee.
- Release the identity of any prospective witnesses.
- Release the names of any civilian complainant(s) initiating the charges when this may pose a danger to the complainant(s).
- Release the name of the victim of a sex crime.
- Refer to the arrestee as a "known gangster," "depraved character" or other derogatory term.
- Pose an arrestee for news media representatives to videotape or photograph.



**No member of the Department will speak to the media without first contacting PIO and apprising them of the details surrounding an incident or event. PIO: (631) 852-6308.**

## Distribution to the Media

While this guide is meant for Department members, it should also be made available to the media. This will provide the media the opportunity to become familiar with our Department's protocol and what to expect from members of the Department.

## Media as "Bystanders"

The following guidelines, contained in Chapter 9, Sections 21 and 27 of the Rules and Procedures, pertain to members of the media, who are "bystanders" at the scene of incidents.

Bystanders, including the media, at police incidents are permitted to remain, outside of police lines, provided their presence and activities are lawful and do not unlawfully compromise the safety and outcome of police activity or violate the privacy of individuals. Bystanders may:

- Observe the incident.
- Record the incident in any media format.
- Comment regarding the incident.

Department members are prohibited from confiscating recorded media.

- If a Department member believes recorded media has evidentiary value, the member will request the voluntary surrender of the recorded media. If supplied, the member will immediately notify his/her supervisor and PIO; properly inventory and document receipt of and authorization to search the property in accordance with the Rules and Procedures, including completion of PDCS-1067, Permission to Search, no matter how consent is provided.
- If the media is not voluntarily surrendered and the Department member believes it may have evidentiary value, the member will immediately notify his/her supervisor and PIO; inform the individual that the media should not be tampered with, altered or destroyed; attempt to obtain the personal identification, media credentials, or contact information of the individual; appropriately document the request and response; and assist his/her supervisor in preparing warrant documents for the media.

Seizure and warrantless searches of portable recording devices from media personnel are permitted only in situations where the individual is under arrest; directly involved in a criminal act; or, if there is reason to believe that an immediate search will prevent death or serious bodily injury to a person.

## Remember

### Public Access = Media Access

**Department members shall work cooperatively with the news media to keep the public informed.**

Public Information Office

30 Yaphank Avenue

Yaphank, New York 11980

(631)852-6308, 6309

**Twenty-four hours a day, Seven days a week**

**Email: [PIO@suffolkcountyny.gov](mailto:PIO@suffolkcountyny.gov)**

**[www.suffolkpd.org](http://www.suffolkpd.org)**

**Suffolk County Crime Stoppers 1-800-220-TIPS**

# SUFFOLK COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT

## POLICE & THE MEDIA



### *DEDICATED TO KEEPING THE PUBLIC INFORMED*

*"Members of the Suffolk County Police Department shall work cooperatively with the news media to keep the public informed."*

It is the policy of the Suffolk County Police Department to maintain an atmosphere of openness with the media and the communities it serves, as an informed public is better equipped to deal with current trends and patterns of activity. This practice also keeps the public apprised of the Department's efforts to keep our communities safe. In seeking to accomplish these objectives, the Department recognizes the rights of victims and witnesses, as well as the importance of maintaining the integrity of criminal investigations and defendants' right to a fair trial.

*This guide provides an overview of Department policy. Department members shall refer to Chapter 26, Section 2 and Chapter 9, Sections 21 and 27 of the Rules and Procedures for additional direction.*

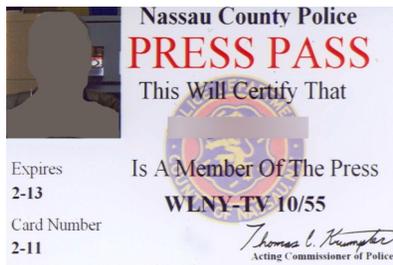
**Public Information Section**

- The Public Information Office (PIO) is the liaison between the Department and the media.
- PIO will respond to serious police incidents to assist Department members and the media with fulfilling their joint expectations.
- PIO will field inquiries from the media.
- PIO will assist Department members with the preparation and dissemination of media releases.
- **PIO is responsible for resolving concerns between Department personnel and the members of the media.**
- Public Information Section: (631) 852-6308.

**Events that should be reported to PIO**

- Robbery, kidnapping and other major crimes
- Arrests in major investigations
- Missing children under the age of 10
- Serious automobile crashes
- Incidents resulting in accidental deaths or serious physical injury
- Suicide (minimizes media interest)
- Homicides and attempted homicides
- Natural death of public figure or a famous person
- Police-involved shootings that result in injury
- Significant fires
- Rescue/save made by Department members
- Significant event of unusual nature
- Inquiries from/or incidents involving the media.
- Do not delay reporting events to PIO.

**Sample Nassau County PD Press Pass**  
Valid in Suffolk County



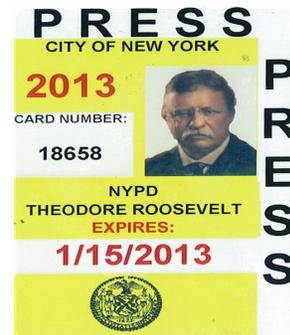
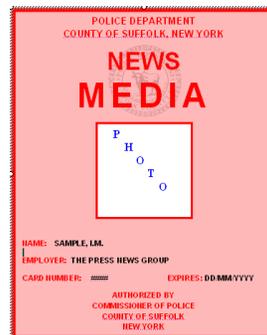
**Patrol Division Responsibilities**

- Notify PIO of the details of a newsworthy event.
- No member of the Department will speak to the media without first contacting PIO. After notification, the OIC may release information to the media.
- Patrol personnel will not release information to the media on incidents where a detective has been assigned.
- Members of the media possessing a valid SCPD, NCPD or NYPD media identification card may be granted access to scenes beyond the outer perimeter.
  1. OIC may authorize establishment of a designated media area.
  2. If a scene is located on private property, the OIC will not grant media access without the approval of the person having authority over the property.
  3. Safety is of utmost priority. News media shall not be granted access to an area where extreme or imminent danger exists.
  4. The media will not be granted access if their presence will compromise police operations or the safety of Department members. **Members of the media, however, are not restricted from taking video or photographs from areas that are open to the public.**
- Do not release statistics. Media requests for statistics or inquiries on policy shall be directed to PIO.

**Remember: Public Access = Media Access**

**Sample News Media Identification Cards**

*SCPD, NCPD and NYC Press Passes are valid in Suffolk*



**Detective Division Responsibilities**

- Notify PIO of the details of a newsworthy event.
- When the Detective Division assumes control of a scene, information regarding the scene or investigation shall only be released by the detective supervisor or the detective-in-charge.
- Provide sufficient factual information to PIO in a timely manner for the preparation of a media release. Prior to dissemination, PIO will give the investigating command the opportunity to review the media release.
- Supplementary information/updates shall be provided to PIO in a timely manner.
- Joint Operations - it is the responsibility of the agency in control of the investigation/incident to release information to the news media. To ensure unity of effort, agencies involved shall determine who will release information to the media.

**What May Be Released & When**

- Prior to Arrest - Pertinent facts relating to the crime itself may be made available. The details of investigative procedure will not be disclosed, except to aid in the apprehension of the suspect, to warn the public of any dangers or to otherwise aid in the investigation.
- After Arrest - The following may be released after the arrest:
  1. The accused's name, age, residence, employment, marital status and similar background information (**except juveniles**).
  2. The text of the charge, such as complaint, indictment, information, and where appropriate, the identity of the complainant (except when complainant is under 16).
  3. The identity of the investigating/arresting agency and the length of the investigation.
  4. The circumstances immediately surrounding the arrest (time and place, resistance, pursuit, weapons involved and a description of items seized at the time of arrest).

**Department members shall work cooperatively with members of the news media to keep the public informed.**