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| <b>HAVERFORD TOWNSHIP POLICE<br/>DEPARTMENT<br/>OPERATIONS MANUAL</b> |                                     |  |
| <b>Issue Date</b><br>February 2021                                    | <b>Review Date</b><br>February 2022 | <b>Directive Number</b><br><b>6.5.3</b>   |
| <b>Accreditation Index:</b>   |                                     | <b>Rescinds:</b><br>Directive 6.5.3 of<br>November 2019                             |
| <b>Chapter:</b> Six – General Procedures                              |                                     | <b>Section:</b> Five – Communications and<br>Information Technology                 |
| <b>Chief of Police:</b> <i>John F. Viola</i>                          |                                     |   |

**SUBJECT: POLICE – MEDIA RELATIONS**

**I. PURPOSE**

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

**II. POLICY**

It is the policy of this Department to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the Department, as long as these activities do not unduly interfere with Departmental operation, infringe upon individual rights or violate the law.

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. **Public Information** – Information that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures or events involving the Department or other newsworthy information that is not legally protected, does not unduly interfere with the mission of the Department, infringe upon the rights of a defendant or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of officers, victims, witnesses or others.
  
- B. **News Media Representative** – Those individuals who are directly employed by agencies of the electronic or print media such as radio, television and newspapers. Free-lance workers in this field are to be regarded

as other members of the general public unless otherwise designated by the Chief of Police.

- C. **Public Information Officer (PIO)** – A sworn member of the department designated by the Chief of Police that serves as a central source of information for release by the Department. The PIO shall respond to requests for information by the news media and the community.

#### IV. PROCEDURES

- A. The Chief of Police shall designate which officer(s) can release information to the News Media or the public. Generally only the designated Public Information Officer or a Command Officer in Charge shall release information. Any information released shall comply with the procedures identified in this directive.
- B. Duties of the Public Information Officer
1. The Department's PIO is available to:
    - a) Assist news personnel in covering routine news stories, and at the scenes of incidents;
    - b) Assist the news media on an on-call basis;
    - c) Prepare and distribute news releases;
    - d) Arrange for, and assist at news conferences;
    - e) Coordinate and obtain authorization for the release of information about victims, witnesses and suspects;
    - f) Assist in crisis situations at the discretion of the Incident Commander;
    - g) Coordinate the release of authorized information concerning confidential Departmental investigations and operations;
- C. Cooperation with the Media
1. Authorized news media representatives shall have reasonable access to the PIO, the Chief of Police or his designee and operations of the Department as governed by this policy. When information must be denied to media representatives, the basis for that denial should be fully and courteously explained.
  2. This Department recognizes authorized identification from all local, national and international news organizations. Failure of media personnel to present authorized identification may provide grounds for restricting access to requested information or to incident scenes.

3. Public information shall be released to the media as promptly as circumstances allow, without partiality and in as objective a manner as possible.
4. Public information may be provided to media representatives by telephone if identity of the representative is known or can be authenticated.
5. Command officers at crime or incident scenes may release information of a factual nature to the media as governed by this policy or refer the inquiry to the PIO. Where the command officer is unsure of the facts or the propriety of releasing information, he/she shall refer the inquiry to the PIO.
6. Written press statements shall be released only following approval of the Chief of Police, his designee or the PIO.
7. The On Duty Supervisor shall inform the Duty Commander as soon as possible upon receipt of information about events or activities that may have media interest.
8. The Duty Commander shall be responsible for ensuring that the Chief of Police and the Department's PIO is informed of events that may have media interest.

D. Investigative Information

1. From the initial stage of a criminal investigation until the completion of trial or disposition without trial, police personnel shall refer all requests for information about the investigation or incident to the Chief of Police, his designee or the PIO.
  - a) If proper authorization is given, information that may be released in connection with an investigation of an event or crime includes:
    - (1) The type or nature of an event or crime;
    - (2) The location, date and time, injuries sustained, damages and a general description of how the incident occurred;
    - (3) Requests for aid in locating evidence, a complainant or suspect.
2. Information that may not be released in connection with an investigation of an event or crime, unless specifically authorized by the Chief of Police or his designee includes:
  - a) The identity of a suspect prior to arrest unless such information would aid in apprehending the suspect or serve to warn the public of potential danger;
  - b) The identity of any victim of a sex crime or any related information which, if divulged, could lead to the victim's
  - c) The identity of victims or witnesses if such disclosure would prejudice an investigation to any significant degree, or if it would place the victim in personal danger;

- d) The identity of any juvenile who is a suspect or defendant in a case subject to the jurisdiction of the juvenile court;
- e) The identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to notification of next of kin;
- f) The results of any investigation procedure such as lineups, polygraph tests, fingerprint comparison, ballistics test or other procedures (the fact that these tests have been performed may be revealed without further comment);
- g) information which, if prematurely released, may interfere with the investigation or apprehension such as the nature of leads, specifics of an “MO”, details of the crime known only to the perpetrator and the police, or information that may cause the suspect to flee or more effectively avoid apprehension;
- h) Information that may be of evidentiary value in criminal proceedings;
- i) Specific cause of death unless officially determined by the medical examiner; and
- j) The home address or telephone number of any member of the Department.

E. Arrest Information

1. Following arrest, issuance of an arrest warrant or filing of information or indictment, it is permissible to release:
  - a) The accused name, age, residence, occupation and family status;
  - b) The time and place of arrest, whether pursuit or resistance was encountered, whether weapons were used, charges placed against the suspect and description of contraband seized;
  - c) The amount of bail, scheduled court dates and place of the suspect’s detention (if known with certainty, otherwise refer to the proper agency).
2. Following arrest and formal charging of a suspect, but prior to adjudication, the following types of information should not be released without express permission from the Chief of Police:
  - a) Prior criminal conviction record, character or reputation of a defendant.
  - b) Existence or contents of any confession, admission or statement of a defendant, or his failure or unwillingness to make a statement.
  - c) Performance or results of any tests, or a defendant’s refusal or failure to submit to tests such as a polygraph not contained in the affidavit of probable cause.

- d) Identity, statement or expected testimony of any witness or victim.
- e) Any opinion about the guilt or innocence of a defendant or the merits of the case.
- f) Any opinion or knowledge of the potential for pleas bargain or other pretrial action.

F. Special Considerations – Criminal Matters

1. Departmental personnel shall extend every reasonable courtesy to news media representatives at crime scenes. This may include closer access of personnel and equipment than available to the general public to the degree that it does not interfere with the police mission or the movement of traffic. The Department will have one person designated as media contact.
2. The news media shall not be allowed access to any area or scene of an incident or crime where there is a possibility that evidence may be damaged, altered, destroyed or otherwise prejudiced by its existence being published or portrayed. Once evidence has been processed, removed and secured by the Department, the media may be allowed to enter by permission of the commanding officer at the scene who will consult with the lead investigator.
  - a) On private property, photography, film or videotape recording requires the permission of the owner or the owner's representative.
  - b) Suspects or accused persons in custody shall not be posed or arrangements made for photographs, telecasts or interviews, nor shall departmental personnel pose with suspects or accused persons in custody.
  - c) When an individual is charged with a criminal offense and is sought by law enforcement authorities, photographs or mug shots may be released to the media to help locate the individual. No Departmental photographs, mug shots, videotapes, film or composites of subjects in custody shall otherwise be released to the media unless authorized by the Chief of Police or authorized designee.
3. At the scene of major crimes, such as hostage and barricade situations, the officer in charge shall designate a preliminary press area as early as possible and as close to the scene as safety and operational requirements allow.
4. The fact that a suicide or suspected suicide has occurred may, after consultation with the Delaware County Medical Examiner's investigator and the lead investigator, be reported to the media, along with factual information describing how it happened. The name, age, address, sex and occupation of the victim may also be released following notification of the next of kin. The fact that a suicide note exists may also be acknowledged without further

comment. The content of such notes is personal and confidential and shall not be released except as provided by law.

G. Special Considerations – Non-criminal Matters

1. At the scenes of significant accidents, made-made or natural catastrophes, the principles of media cooperation shall be maintained to the degree that they do not interfere with the mission of police, fire, medical or other emergency relief workers.
2. Media access to and movement within fire lines shall be controlled by the fire officer in charge. In consultation with the fire officer in charge, the ranking police officer shall establish an observation point from which the media may observe and photograph the incident.
3. News media representatives should not be prevented from access to any area solely because of the possibility of their injury or death. If this is the only consideration, the media representative should be advised of the danger and allowed to make the decision to enter on his/she own volition.
4. Sensitive information relating to internal investigation of police officers shall not be released without express permission from the Chief of Police.
5. Media representatives shall be denied access to contents of investigative or incident reports and records where release of the information would;
  - a) Interfere with law enforcement proceedings, including pending investigations;
  - b) Deprive a person of the right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, or give one party to a controversy an undue advantage by exclusive access to such information;
  - c) Constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy rights of another person;
  - d) Reveal the identity of an individual who has furnished information to the Department under confidential circumstances;
  - e) Disclose investigative techniques and procedures, thereby impairing future effectiveness of the Department; and
  - f) Endanger the life or physical safety of any person.

**BY ORDER OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE**