

# HONOLULU POLICE DEPARTMENT

## POLICY SUPPORT OPERATIONS

November 18, 2015

Policy Number 5.06

### MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS

#### POLICY

Information made available to the public regarding incidents and issues shall be provided to the news media on a timely basis.

#### PROCEDURE

##### I. RELEASE OF INFORMATION

##### A. Police Investigations or Operations

2-14-2022

1. The officer in charge (OIC) at a crime scene or newsworthy event, or a department-designated spokesperson, is responsible for providing available information to accredited news media representatives.
2. The OIC may release the following routine information:
  - a. The classification of the case (e.g., homicide, natural death, robbery, burglary, sexual abuse, etc.);
  - b. Time of occurrence;
  - c. General information about the case (e.g., armed suspect entered the bank and fled with an undisclosed amount of money, victim was assaulted by an unknown male following an argument, a woman was sexually assaulted in Waikiki, hikers reported finding human remains near trail, etc.);

- d. General, biographical data on the suspect (e.g., sex, age, and area of residence).

NOTE: The suspect's name shall not be released until he or she is charged, except as provided in Policy 5.08, PUBLIC ACCESS TO ARREST LOGS. The suspect's prior arrest history shall not be released;

- e. Time and place of arrest; and
  - f. Custody status of a suspect (e.g., bail; bond; released on own recognizance; and time, date, and place of arraignment or court appearance), if known.
3. Confidential information shall not be released. This includes the following:
- a. Direct or circumstantial evidence implicating a suspect;
  - b. Existence or contents of a confession, admission, or statement given by a suspect;
  - c. A suspect's refusal to give a statement;
  - d. The results of any examination, interrogation, or test administered to a suspect;
  - e. A suspect's refusal to submit to an examination, interrogation, or test;
  - f. The identity, testimony, or credibility of any prospective or confidential witness;
  - g. The identity or statement of a police informant; and
  - h. The identity of a victim.

2-14-2022

- 4. Division-level commanders, their designees, or a department-designated spokesperson shall respond to routine inquiries and release follow-up information pertinent to investigations or operations within their area of responsibility.
  - a. It may be necessary or advisable under certain circumstances to temporarily withhold information or facts that can reasonably be expected to interfere with a criminal investigation. For example, these may include (1) a victim's identity, (2) the exact nature of the injury, (3) the weapon used or suspected, (4) a suspect's known or possible motive and/or whereabouts, (5) details of monetary loss, (6) cause or reason for the incident, etc.
  - b. All requests for information related to any investigation referred to a basic support unit (as described in Policy 4.29, CRIME SCENE: INVESTIGATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCEDURES) shall be directed to that unit.

B. Departmental Policy or Administration

- 1. The Chief of Police or a designee shall be the spokesperson on matters relating to departmental policy or administration.
- 2. A media liaison can be contacted directly or via the Communications Division to provide guidance or assistance in all matters relating to the release of information to the media and/or police-media relations.

C. Media Releases and News Conferences

- 1. All formal news releases shall be coordinated with and/or prepared and distributed by a media liaison.

Requests for the release of news media notices shall be reviewed by element commanders and submitted for approval by the Chief of Police.

2. All formal news conferences (i.e., those occasions when an element invites the media to be present for any purpose) shall be coordinated with, scheduled, and attended by a media liaison.

D. Correspondence to Media Organizations

All correspondence bearing the signature block of the Chief of Police released to any media organization shall receive prior approval from the Chief of Police.

E. Investigations Involving Departmental Employees

The identity of a departmental employee under investigation (e.g., when a suspect has been injured) shall be withheld pending completion of the investigation into the incident.

1. If an employee is criminally charged as a result of the investigation, the employee's identity will be released to the media in the same manner as for other suspects.
2. If a departmental employee is cleared of culpability (e.g., injuries are determined to have been "justified"), that information will be released. However, the identity of the employee may be withheld.

II. COMMITTEES, SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS, AND INTERVIEWS

A. Committee Membership

1. All personnel who serve as members of a committee, whether it be sponsored by the government or a special interest community organization, shall submit to the Community Affairs Division (CAD) the name of the committee and its sponsorship, the individual's personal status with the committee, and the purpose for which the committee was formed.

2. Assignments to committees shall be made in accordance with the following:
  - a. Any member of the department who is approached to serve on any committee as a representative of the Honolulu Police Department (HPD) shall obtain written permission from the Chief of Police prior to accepting the position;
  - b. Members of the department may accept requests to serve on committees that are made by government agencies and community organizations on a personal basis. In such cases, however, it should be made clear that the individual is serving as a private citizen and not as a member or representative of the HPD;
  - c. If an employee's position as a member of the HPD is an obvious deciding factor in committee membership, even though the invitation to serve appears to be personal, the employee shall obtain the approval of the Chief of Police before accepting the position; and
  - d. These instructions shall not be construed so as to prevent any member of this department from serving on any standard committee whose membership is determined by reason of position within the department (e.g., the major of the Traffic Division serving on a traffic safety committee).

3. Recognition of Committee Membership

- a. Whenever the Chief of Police assigns an individual to serve on a committee, the individual's name, title, and position with the department may be listed on material generated by that committee.
- b. Whenever a member of the department serves on a committee as a private citizen, the individual's name may be listed on material generated by the committee. However, no reference shall be made to the individual's title or position with the department.

4. Committee Reports

- a. Any member of the department who is assigned by the Chief of Police to serve on a committee shall protect the interests and integrity of the department in all committee proceedings, reports, suggestions, or recommendations.
- b. If a report of the committee is detrimental to the best interests of the department, the matter shall be immediately brought to the attention of the Chief of Police. The member shall then request that a minority report also be presented to express the dissenting viewpoint of the department and others who are opposed to the majority of the committee.
- c. If the request to present a minority report is refused by the committee, the member shall apprise the Chief of Police of the decision in order that proper attention may be given to other means of expressing the department's viewpoint.

B. Public Appearances and Speaking Engagements

1. All requests from community organizations, business firms, clubs, churches, social groups, schools, or the media for police personnel to make public appearances or fulfill speaking engagements shall be referred to the CAD for coordination.
2. Other requests, such as for the display of police equipment or guided tours of police facilities, shall also be referred to the CAD.
3. To ensure that the assignment of personnel is handled efficiently, all requests for such services should be made at least four weeks prior to the date of the event or appearance. The person or group representative making the request shall be made aware of the policy requiring four weeks' prior notice.
4. The CAD shall maintain a record of all requests and make appropriate notifications to the various elements to provide the necessary personnel.
5. The CAD shall make current, topical material available for presentation purposes.
6. Personnel assigned to make public appearances or fulfill speaking engagements are cautioned to protect the interests and integrity of the department at all times and avoid erroneous remarks or statements that the department would be obligated to rectify publicly.
7. Upon completion of an assigned public appearance or speaking engagement, personnel shall submit a PUBLIC APPEARANCES AND SPEAKER REQUESTS - AFTER-ACTION REPORT, HPD-415 form.

C. News Media Interviews

News media interviews with departmental personnel on police-related issues shall be conducted only upon approval of the individual's division-level commander; news media interviews with division-level commanders shall be conducted only upon approval of the commander's bureau or deputy chief. Division-level commanders shall advise the Media Liaison Office of authorized interviews and topics to be discussed.

NOTE: This restriction does not affect procedures for the release of routine information on police investigations. The officer in charge at a crime scene or of an investigation may continue to provide routine information on police investigations to the news media.

III. COMMERCIAL TESTIMONIALS

Officers and employees shall not permit their names or photographs to be used for endorsement of any product or service that is in any way connected with law enforcement without the permission of the Chief of Police. Also, officers and employees shall not allow their names or photographs to be used in any commercial testimonial that alludes to their position or employment with the department without the permission of the Chief of Police.

IV. NEWS MEDIA ACCESS TO CRIME SCENES AND NEWSWORTHY EVENTS

Media representatives bearing news media identification shall be permitted to contact the OIC for permission to cross police lines to obtain information or photographs.

- A. This is a privilege not afforded to members of the general public at a crime scene or newsworthy event.

Note: The news media are allowed the same access to scenes as the general public. Reporters and camera crews cannot be denied access if the general public is allowed entrance into the area.



- B. Members of the news media are asked to produce their identification when seeking permission to cross police lines. This may be a media identification card, a business card with a photograph, or a business card with separate photographic identification.
- C. Permission to cross police lines may be denied by the OIC when admittance of a media representative is likely to hinder an ongoing investigation or operation, destroy evidence, or contaminate a crime scene. It may also be denied when a member of the media lacks proper identification.
- D. No officer shall prevent or interfere with news media representatives who are taking photographs of scenes that are within view of the public or are questioning suspects, victims, or witnesses in any public place. Similarly, no officer shall "pose" or present a suspect, victim, or witness for photographing or interviews for the convenience of news media representatives.



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Interim Chief of Police

Post on bulletin  
board for one week

Policy first issued  
March 29, 2002