



TYLER POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER: 14.100

	PUBLIC INFORMATION	
	EFFECTIVE DATE: 03-01-1993	
	REVISED DATE: 11-7-2019	
CALEA STANDARDS: 54.1.1 – 54.1.3; 11.3.4		

14.101 PURPOSE

- A. The Tyler Police Department recognizes the need for the public to have accurate and true information concerning events that have an impact on the community's welfare or interest. To meet this need the Chief of Police will designate an employee to serve as the Department's Public Information Officer (PIO). The Public Information Office should strive to achieve the highest degree of cooperation with members of the news media while endeavoring to project the best image of the Department.

14.102 RESPONSIBILITY – [CALEA Standard: 54.1.1]

- A. It will be the responsibility of the Public Information Officer (PIO) or a member of the PIO Team to coordinate and communicate directly, or through authorized personnel, information of public interest pertaining to major criminal incidents and other newsworthy police-related activities. This information will be disseminated in a timely manner to news media outlets.
- B. Additional PIO responsibilities included, but are not limited to:
1. Addressing all media concerns from 7:00 am to 10:00 pm, Monday through Sunday;
 - a. The Night Shift Patrol Lieutenant / Commander or Acting Shift Commander will be responsible for handling all PIO responsibilities from 10:00 pm to 7:00 am unless the PIO are a member of the PIO Team is called out to handle the event.
 2. Be available 24 hours a day for on-call purposes, unless otherwise unreachable (i.e. Sick, Vacation, etc.);
 3. Maintain an assigned cell phone/number that is available at all times to Command Staff and media outlets;
 4. Assist news media employees in covering routine news stories and at incident scenes;

- a. The PIO shall be responsible for notifying most, if not all, local news media outlets via telephone and/or email concerning special news release. This is done to ensure that all news media outlets have equal access to information upon its release.
- 5. Prepare and distribute agency news releases:
 - a. Information regarding news worthy events/incidents shall be released to all media representatives by the PIO or other authorized personnel in writing or verbally.
 - b. A digital file of all written press releases and their titles shall be maintained on the Department's W-drive by the PIO.
- 6. Arrange and assist in Department news conferences;
- 7. Coordinate the release of authorized information about victims, witnesses and suspects as permitted by state statute;
- 8. Coordinate the release of authorized information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations; and
 - a. Requests from news media outlets for information pertaining to internal affairs matters are to be directed to the Integrity Unit Sergeant.
 - b. Any information released to a news media outlet pertaining to an internal affairs investigation shall be done so at the discretion and approval of the Chief of Police.
- 9. Hold function supervisor over the Department's PIO Team and assist in the recruitment and development of its members as approved by the Chief of Police.

14.103 INFORMATION RELEASE, STORAGE, AND ACCESS

- A. The PIO, PIO Team members and other authorized Department personnel (in the absence of the PIO or PIO Team members) shall render reasonable assistance to all accredited members of the news media. Furthermore, no member of the Department shall unduly hamper, delay, or withhold information from an accredited member of the news media in pursuit of a news story unless the pursuit is prone to:
 - 1. Endanger the safety of Department employees and/or the general public at the scene of an incident;
 - 2. Jeopardize the success of an ongoing investigation and/or the prosecution of arrested persons; and
 - 3. Impair or interfere with a parties' legal rights.
- B. All members of the media have free access to information retained on the [Department's P2C webpage](#). The information is generated automatically from approved incident reports and updated daily.

- C. All content contained within Department issued news media releases must conform to [Texas Government Code Ch. 552 – Texas Public Information Act](#).

14.104 PERSONNEL AUTHORIZED TO RELEASE INFORMATION

- A. When authorized Department personnel (including members of the PIO Team), other than the Public Information Officer, release statements or comments concerning significant police-related events, the PIO shall be notified.
 - 1. Department personnel authorized to release information include:
 - a. Public Information Officer (PIO);
 - b. PIO Team Members;
 - c. Sworn Supervisors; or
 - d. Any employee designated by a Sworn Supervisor or the PIO.
 - 2. Communications Unit personnel may release information to media outlets regarding traffic and roadway conditions due to inclement weather and/or major traffic collisions.
 - 3. When necessary, the Chief of Police, Asst. Chiefs / Division Commanders, or the PIO may issue appropriate news media releases concerning events that have been investigated or otherwise handled by the Department.
 - 4. The on-duty Patrol Shift Lieutenant / Commander is responsible for the release of information concerning significant incident(s) / event(s) occurring after normal business hours (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.) or whenever the PIO or a member of the PIO Team is unavailable.
 - a. In the absence of the Patrol Shift Lieutenant / Commander the Acting Patrol Shift Commander shall be responsible for the release of information concerning significant incident(s) / event(s) occurring during the shift.
 - b. Additionally, the Acting Patrol Shift Commander shall be required to check-out the media access cell phone to be kept on their person for the duration of their shift.
 - 5. Should a media outlet request an interview, the Chief of Police or their designee will make the determination if the interview is to be conducted and who will represent the Department.
 - 6. All press conferences shall be arranged by the Department PIO with the assistance of the PIO Team and City's PIO upon the approval of the Chief of Police or their designee.
 - 7. Any information released concerning an on-going criminal investigation shall be approved by the Chief of Police or his designee prior to the information being released.
 - 8. Inquiries from a news media outlet regarding issues of an administrative nature

(e.g. policy, procedures, personnel, etc.) shall be submitted to the Chief of Police for review and approval. Once committed on, there shall be no further statements made on these releases, or related topics except by the Chief of Police or their designee.

9. Should any Department employee encounter problems with a member of the news media refusing to cooperate, displaying a blatant disregard for a police order or any other unusual circumstance, shall notify the Chief of Police and the PIO via their chain of command.

14.105 MEDIA ACCESS IN FIELD SITUATIONS – [CALEA Standard: 54.1.3]

- A. News media representatives will be allowed access to a scene as soon as practical once authorized by the highest ranking investigating employee.
 1. Exceptions:
 - a. The presence of the media might adversely impact the preservation of the crime scene, evidence or interfere with an ongoing investigation/operations.
 - b. Members of the media would be exposed to a clear and present danger or potentially unsafe conditions.
 2. If the highest ranking investigative employee or the PIO / PIO Team Member decides that the media should be kept from the scene or immediate area, the media representatives shall be notified.
 - a. The PIO / PIO Team Member or ranking highest ranking employee should provide informational briefings to the media until such time as the scene is considered safe for entry by the media.
 - b. Once the scene is secure and safe for the members of the media to enter, the PIO / PIO Team Member or any employee so designated by the highest ranking employee, may conduct an on-scene tour with the media representatives.
 - c. If an incident occurs on private property, members of the media are allowed access only with the approval of the property owner.
 - d. Members of the media are permitted to photograph prisoners in transit as long as this activity does not interfere with any police operation / investigation.
- B. At the scene of an unusual occurrence (e.g. man-made / natural disasters, civil disturbance, etc.) the media shall be required to comply with the subsection noted directly above.
 1. Should a state of emergency be declared and the City of Tyler Emergency Operations Center activated, **ANNEX I** (Emergency Public Information) of the Emergency Operations Plan will be followed.
 - a. **ANNEX I** is maintained on the City shared P-drive and is located within the Emergency Management folder.

14.106 POLICY DEVELOPMENT – [CALEA Standard: 54.1.2]

- A. Annually the PIO shall meet with members of the media for the purpose of evaluating the Department's public information policy. The meeting shall serve as an opportunity for the Department to update media outlets on new procedures while at the same time provide the media with a mechanism for making recommend to existing policies and procedures.

14.107 RELEASE OF INFORMATION

- A. Information released to news media outlets shall adhere to the requirements of this policy. Release procedure may differ due to a variety of circumstances, but in no instance is information deemed non-releasable to be provided to any member of the news media or public.
 - 1. The following information relating to events conducted by or incidents investigated by the Department **MAY BE RELEASED** to the news media and public:
 - a. Event or Incident / offense type;
 - b. Description of the event or incident / offense, including but not limited to:
 - 1) Date and Time;
 - 2) Location (except when the release of the location would intrude on a victim's right to privacy and/or violates any of the criteria listed in subsection 14.107(A)(2) below);
 - 3) Property involved (except the release of property that violates any of the criteria listed in subsection 14.107(A)(2) below);
 - 4) Vehicle(s) involved;
 - 5) Charge and amendments;
 - 6) Amount of bail, conditions of bail, and date of release;
 - 7) Complainant and/or victim's identity / biographical information (except for victims of sex offense and confidential informants).
 - a) The name and/or identifying information of a deceased individual shall not to be released until the next of kin has been notified.
 - 8) The investigating and/or arresting agency, length of the investigation, and name of investigating/arresting person;
 - 9) The scheduled or next procedural step in a case;
 - 10) Any information that is contained in a public record (e.g. CRASH Reports, arrest reports, etc.) that is not subject to redaction;
 - 11) Information deemed necessary as a means of seeking assistance from the community to obtaining evidence, locating suspects,

and/or to warn the general public; and

- 12) Jail and/or driver's license photograph of a suspect / arrestee if the person is in custody or has been classified as an escapee or fugitive.

2. The following information relating to events conducted by or incidents investigated by the Department **MAY NOT BE RELEASED** to the news media and public:

- a. The identification and description of witnesses and confidential informants who are not victims;
- b. Any admissions or statements made by an accused, including the existence of a confession or refusal to give a confession;
- c. Any statement(s) made by confidential informants, witnesses, victims and complainants;
- d. Any speculation or opinions regarding:
 - 1) The guilt / innocence or reputation of an accused person;
 - 2) The credibility of a witness or witnesses;
 - 3) Evidence or theories;
 - 4) Anticipated testimony; and
 - 5) Pleas of guilt and/or innocence.
- e. Evidence testing results, including, but not limited to:
 - 1) Ballistics;
 - 2) Fingerprint comparison(s);
 - 3) Blood and biological matter; and
 - 4) Polygraph examination(s) (requests, offers, refusals, and results)
 - i. The Chief of Police alone may authorize the release specific information as deemed necessary or appropriate.
- f. A description of seized items or evidence discovered during an investigation, unless or until such item(s) become the subject of a chargeable offense;
- g. An individual's criminal history, except to aid in the apprehension of a wanted person and/or to warn the general public. Any request for such information must be in accordance with [Texas Government Code, Ch. 552 – Texas Public Information Act](#);
- h. The name and address of a sex offense victim or any address that would to

the identification of the victim;

- i. The name(s) of a juvenile(s) taken into custody;
- j. The name(s) of a suspect(s) not currently wanted, unless it is believed the suspect(s) poses a substantial safety concern to the general public;
- k. No audio or video recording may be released without the authorization from the Chief of Police or their designee; and
- l. Social security number, driver's license number, vehicle license plate, or VIN numbers, except to aid in the apprehension of a wanted person or out of concern for the safety of the general public or a specific individual(s).

14.108 JURISDICTION – [CALEA Standard: 54.1.1]

- A. In the event that the Department becomes involved in an incident with any other public safety agency (i.e., Fire Department, Smith County SO, DPS, etc.), the agency having primary jurisdiction shall be responsible for all news releases and comments concerning the investigation.
 - 1. At the request of the primary agency and approval of the Chief of Police or their designee the Department may assume control of the public information function concerning the incident / investigation.

14.109 RESPONSIBILITIES INVOLVING POLICE ACTION DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

[CALEA Standard: 11.3.4]

- A. As soon as practical the PIO, or in their absence a member of the PIO Team, is to be contacted when the actions of an employee of this agency result in the death of any person or a member of this Department is killed in the line of duty.
 - 1. All questions / inquiries concerning the incident shall be directed to the PIO / PIO Team member.
- B. When notified, the PIO / PIO Team member shall be responsible for contacting news media outlets regarding the incident and the media's on-scene designated staging area. Once on scene and at the direction of the Chief of Police or their designee the PIO / PIO Team member may provide a statement / comment concerning the circumstance of the incident.
 - 1. Additional news releases (e.g. press conference, personal interviews, and news releases) shall be scheduled and coordinated through the PIO / PIO Team member at the direction / approval of the Chief of Police or their designee.
 - 2. The release of information pertaining to an incident of this nature, including outside agencies and jurisdictional concerns, shall comply with the Department's [PIO Police Action Death Investigation Plan](#).

14.110 CRIME STATISTICS

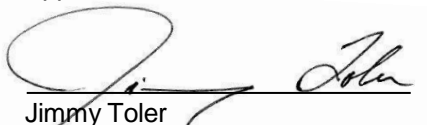
- A. Statistics

1. Crime statistics will be released to media outlets as requested with the approval of the Chief of Police or their designee.
- B. Annual Statistics
1. The City Manager and the City Council will be provided with the Department's Annual Statistics prior to their release to the media and public.

14.111 SOCIAL NETWORK SITES – [CALEA Standard: 54.1.1]

- A. The Department utilizes social networking sites (i.e. Facebook, Twitter) to provide the public with an alternate way of receiving police-related information and emergency notifications. Only personnel designated by the Chief of Police are permitted to post information on social networking sites used by the Department. Information posted to any of the social networking sites used by the Department will be restricted to official police business.
- B. Information posts may include, but is not limited to:
1. Significant events;
 2. Hazardous traffic conditions;
 3. Sever weather conditions;
 4. Meeting announcements; and
 5. Media releases / notifications.
- C. The following personnel are authorized to post information on social networking sites utilized by the Department:
1. PIO / PIO Team member;
 2. City of Tyler / Public Safety PIO; and
 3. Chief of Police

Approved: 11-7-2019



Jimmy Toler
Chief of Police