

News Media and Community Relations

207.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for communicating with the media and the public to ensure the timely, accurate, and consistent dissemination of information and promote positive relationships with the community. It addresses communication regarding newsworthy events, including routine matters and critical incidents.

Nothing in this policy prohibits [Dept_Div_Agency]-designated spokespersons from communicating with the media regarding information specific to their [dept_div_agency] (e.g., police, fire). However, [Dept_Div_Agency]-designated spokespersons remain subject to coordination with the [City_County] [PressInformationOfficer] ([PIO]) during incidents that have [city_county]-wide or cross-[dept_div_agency] impact.

207.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the [City_County] to establish and maintain a positive working relationship with the media and the community by providing timely and accurate information.

207.3 [PRESSINFORMATIONOFFICER]

The [CM_CA] should designate a [City_County] [PIO] to centralize communication with the media and the public. The [PIO] should report directly to the [CM_CA] and is responsible for:

- (a) Serving as the media's primary point of contact for the [City_County].
- (b) Responding to media inquiries.
- (c) Managing distribution of news releases, advisories, and other information to the media and the public.
- (d) Working with [City_County] representatives to coordinate and manage briefings, news conferences, and media interviews.
- (e) Developing a process for the approval of news releases, news conferences, and other official communications in coordination with the [CM_CA].
- (f) Establishing protocols for coordinating with [dept_div_agency] spokespersons (e.g., police, fire) to maintain consistency with overall [City_County] messaging.
- (g) Arranging access to or special tours of [city_county] facilities and incident scenes for media representatives, local leaders, and other visitors in accordance with established procedures, as applicable.
- (h) Developing and maintaining pre-scripted messages, frequently asked questions (FAQs), and communication templates.
- (i) Maintaining an updated list of media contacts.
- (j) Maintaining up-to-date information on the [City_County] website and social media platforms, including contact information for media inquiries.

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- (k) Tracking and archiving media coverage related to the [City_County] in accordance with the established records retention schedule.
- (l) Engaging in proactive communication to promote community awareness of [City_County] programs, services, contributions, and achievements.

207.4 CRITICAL INCIDENT SCENE CONSIDERATIONS

At the scene of a critical incident (e.g., natural disaster, infrastructure failure, transportation accident, public health emergency), the [PIO]:

- (a) Should coordinate media activities and messaging with:
 - 1. Elected officials or their designees to avoid conflicting statements during active incidents.
 - 2. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) (if activated).
 - 3. Any [city_county] [dept_div_agency] involved.
- (b) May provide authorized media representatives with access to critical incident scenes when such access can be accomplished safely and when the [CM_CA] has authorized such activities. Access by the media is subject to the following conditions:
 - 1. Media representatives shall produce valid press credentials and prominently display them at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.
 - 2. A reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the scene, when feasible.
 - 3. Media representatives shall be prevented from interfering with emergency operations, investigations, and incident response activities.
 - 4. Media personnel shall wear proper protective clothing as warranted.
 - 5. Media representatives may be allowed to take photographs and video, provided they do not interfere with facility or incident operations or create a safety hazard.
 - 6. Access may be denied or revoked at any time if safety, security, or operational integrity is compromised.

207.5 NEWS CONFERENCES

A news conference is a pre-scheduled event intended to highlight a newsworthy event, such as a promotion or the opening of a new municipal facility; news conferences can also be used when a representative of the [City_County] desires to make a public appearance. The [CM_CA] will determine the purpose and scope of the conference. Specific information should not be released prior to the conference.

The [PIO]'s responsibilities should include:

- (a) Preparing a news release and/or a prepared statement for the [city_county] spokesperson.

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- (b) Making arrangements for the site, obtaining required equipment, arranging for availability of the news release, identifying photo locations, and providing escorts, as necessary.
- (c) Notifying the appropriate [city_county] personnel of the date, time, and location of all news conferences.

The conference may include a moderator or the [PIO], who should make introductory remarks and introductions, assist with any question-and-answer period that may follow, and conclude the conference.

[City_County] personnel attending the news conference should wear clothing, including dress uniforms, if applicable, as specified in the Dress Code Policy. Attendance requirements will be determined by the [CM_CA].

207.6 TRAINING

The [PIO] should receive periodic training in protocols, media relations, and crisis communication.