



CLACKAMAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Policy # 33

**Printed copies are for reference only.
Please refer to the electronic copy for the latest version.**

PUBLISHED (03/13/2017); REVISED (02/12/2020)

References: [Clackamas County Public & Government Affairs](#)

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS

General

1. The Public Information Unit (PIU) exclusively represents the Sheriff's Office in all media communications. Media inquiries into specific cases shall be referred to the PIO and not individual employees or investigators. An employee who is contacted by media in the course of their official duties will defer all communications to the PIO and immediately advise their supervisor/manager of the contact, who will promptly notify the PIO.

Public Information Officer (PIO)

2. The PIO provides lead work supervision and direction to the PIU and is responsible to the Sheriff for the development, coordination and implementation of PIU activities related to media, business and community relations. The PIO is responsible for assuring the accuracy of information released to the public. The PIO approves media releases and documents the author of any media release.

CCSO Public Information Unit (PIU)

3. The duties of the PIU may include the following:
- a. inform the public of policies, programs, services, activities, operations and initiatives in a manner that is accurate, complete, objective, timely, relevant, understandable, and open and transparent within the law;
 - b. communications to include public media releases and internal communications; and
 - c. maintain a professional, up-to-date, and informative CCSO website and social media network.



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News Media Relations

4. The PIU serves as the exclusive central source of information released by the CCSO. Duties relating to news media may include the following:
 - a. assisting Media/News personnel in obtaining information about incidents in the jurisdiction of the CCSO, to include:
 - (1) preparing and distributing news releases in a timely manner to all interested media organizations;
 - (2) maintaining a file of all releases distributed;
 - (3) responding to routine requests from the media during normal business hours; and
 - (4) arranging for news conferences and interviews with the Sheriff or other individuals when needed.
 - b. respond as necessary to the scene of major incidents, disasters, or emergencies and coordinate media relations and interviews;
 - c. coordinate the release of information concerning investigations and operations;
 - d. coordinate media response when more than one agency is involved to ensure appropriate and consistent release of information;
 - e. refer media requests regarding any prosecution to the County DA; and
 - f. evaluate, and as necessary, respond when the accuracy of information in a press release is challenged, including clarifying or publicly retracting the challenged information when appropriate.



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5. Consistent with security and operational requirements, the PIU will coordinate procedures for:

- a. the use of CCSO facilities by the media and public groups; and
- b. tours of CCSO facilities by the media and public groups.

CCSO Employee Responsibilities to the Media and Request for Information

6. **Contacting the PIU.** CCSO employees, via their supervisor, shall contact the PIU if they believe the media should be notified regarding an event in the course of their duties which may be of value or interest to the public.

7. **Scope and Content of the Release of Information.** The scope and content of each release of information must be determined according to the facts of each situation. Releases will generally include a description of the circumstances that are not legally privileged and will not prejudice the rights of suspects, witnesses, victims or interfere with an investigation. The PIO, sergeant or supervisor at the scene will release information only after consultation with the investigating officer or investigative supervisor.

8. **Media Access to Area of a Serious Incident or Crime.** Boundary lines may be established to prevent persons from entering the area of a serious incident or crime scene:

- a. dependent upon the situation and the likelihood of jeopardizing law enforcement operations, members of the news media may be directed to a designated media staging area; and
- b. the media does not have the authority to be within a crime scene or area that has been secured to preserve evidence, crime scene processing or at any location where the media's presence jeopardizes law enforcement operations or public safety.

9. **News Media Not Exempt from Laws.** A newsperson's primary responsibility is to report the news by obtaining information and photographs at newsworthy events. A CCSO employee should not obstruct the newsperson in the performance of their work; however, members of the media are not exempt from municipal ordinances or state and federal statutes.



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10. **Requesting Withholding of Publication.** News media may photograph or report anything they observe when legally present at an emergency scene. Where publication of such coverage would interfere with an official investigation or place a victim, suspect, or others in jeopardy the PIO should advise the news media or their superiors of the possible consequences of publication; however, the CCSO will not interfere with news media's activities as long as that performance remains within the confines of the law.

11. **Release of Name of Juveniles.** Unless required by law ([ORS 419A](#) and [419B](#)) or court order, the CCSO shall not release the names or identification of juveniles. Requests for Juvenile Record Information shall be referred to the Juvenile Court.

12. **Address and Telephone Number of CCSO Employees.** CCSO employees will not divulge the address or telephone number of any other employee of the Sheriff's Office to members of the media.