

NEW HAVEN DEPARTMENT OF POLICE SERVICE

GENERAL ORDERS



GENERAL ORDER 4.07

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 30, 2016

NEWS MEDIA POLICY

4.07.01 PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines for the dissemination of police information to representatives of the media.

4.07.02 POLICY

It is the policy of the New Haven Department of Police Service to cooperate impartially with the news media in providing information on crime and police-related matters while simultaneously conforming to the protections guaranteed to individuals under the United States Constitution, the Connecticut Constitution and applicable law.

The Chief of Police and the Public Information Officer (PIO) are the official spokespersons for the Department.

4.07.03 PROCEDURES

PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

The Public Information Officer is the central point of contact for the release of information and responses to requests for information from the media and the public.

The Public Information Officer will:

- Assist media representatives covering news stories.
- Assist the news media on an on-call basis.
- Prepare and distribute news releases.
- Coordinate and authorize the release of information about victims, witnesses and suspects.
- Assist in crisis situations within the agency including response to serious incidents.
- Coordinate the release of confidential information concerning agency investigations and operations.

RELEASE OF INCIDENT, CRIME OR UNUSUAL OCCURRENCE INFORMATION – AFTER HOURS

- Outside of normal business hours and in the absence of the PIO, the ranking officer at the scene or in charge of an investigation of a crime, arrest, or other police incident may respond to news media inquiries. The ranking officer may designate a subordinate member to speak to the media. When there is doubt regarding the release of information, the PIO will be contacted for assistance.
- The following information **may** be disseminated:
 - The type and nature of an event or crime.
 - The location, date and time, condition and prognosis of injured parties, damage and a general description of how the event occurred.
 - The type and quantity of property taken.
 - Numbers of officers or people involved in an event or investigation, the length of the investigation or the name of an officer in charge of a case, the supervisor or division assignment.
 - Following an arrest, the following may be released:
 - The accused's name, age, residence, and occupation, unless such person is a juvenile.
 - The time, place, reason for the arrest, and associated charges
 - The amount of bond and court date

- Requests to aid in locating evidence, witnesses, suspects, or perpetrators.
 - Following the issuance of an arrest warrant, the following may be released:
 - Any information to aid in the apprehension of the accused or to warn the public of any dangers that the accused may present
- The following information **will not** be disseminated except where allowed by law and then only through the Office of the Chief of Police:
 - Any information pertaining to police business outside of those inquiries concerning a crime scene or active police investigation.
 - The identity of a suspect prior to arrest unless the information would aid in apprehension or to warn the public of potential danger.
 - The identity or addresses of witnesses or cooperating individuals, or specific information from their oral or written statements that could reasonably be used to identify them or endanger their lives or physical safety.
 - The identity of juvenile suspects, arrestees or victims or any information that could lead to their being identified. The only exception would be if the juvenile poses an imminent threat to themselves or others.
 - Information which may compromise an ongoing investigation.
 - Information that may be of evidentiary value in a criminal proceeding, including video, or image surveillance.
 - If there is a question as to the cause of death, the cause of death will not be released. The information will only be released when officially determined by the medical examiner.
 - The home address and/or telephone number of any member of the Department.
 - Names and addresses of victims of sexual assaults.

When it is necessary to withhold or delay the release of information, Department members will explain the reason for doing so to news media representatives and refer them to the PIO.

- The following **general information** may be released subject to the specific restrictions as indicated below:
 - The identity of a crime victim may be given to the news media **except** when the release of such information may endanger the victim's life or physical safety or the release of such information is prohibited by provisions in this General Order or applicable law.
 - The name of a deceased person may be given to the news media after the next of kin has been notified. If this information is to be released prior to next of kin notification, the PIO should be contacted.
 - Information concerning physical evidence will be released only with the approval of the *Commanding Officer of the Investigative Services Division* or the commanding officer in charge of the investigation. If necessary, the State's Attorney's Office may be contacted for further guidance.

This supersedes General Order 84-1.



Dean Esserman
Chief of Police



Date