

	<b>ELGIN POLICE DEPARTMENT</b> 151 Douglas Avenue Elgin, Illinois 60120	
<b>Effective Date:</b> 04/08/02	<b>STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE</b>	<b>Revised Date:</b> 11/16/12
<b>Chief of Police:</b> 	Public Information, 54.1	
<b>Cross Reference:</b>	<b>Policy Sections:</b> 54.1.1 Public Information Officer 54.1.2 Spokesperson 54.1.3 Field Response 54.1.4 PIO Notification 54.1.5 Multiple Jurisdictions 54.1.6 Press Visits 54.1.7 Ongoing Investigation: Releasable Information 54.1.8 No Pending Investigation: Releasable Information 54.1.9 Information to be Withheld 54.1.10 Media Access: Major Incidents 54.1.11 Development of Policies	

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the release of information to the community and media outlets.

### **POLICY STATEMENT**

It is the policy of the Elgin Police Department to establish and maintain a relationship with the media outlets. The department shall inform the media outlets of events which occur within our jurisdiction in a timely manner with as much information as appropriate.

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **54.1.1 PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER**

- A. The chief of police shall designate an employee to serve as the department's public information officer (PIO) who is responsible for the following functions, but not limited to:
  1. Alert Elgin city council of high-visibility events generating media interest, such as homicides, shootings, accidents with injuries and internal misconduct as appropriate.
  2. Field and coordinate daily media requests.
  3. Be available for on-call responses to the media for a major newsworthy event, including on-scene interactions.
  4. Prepare and disseminate information pertaining to, but not limited to:
    - a. Chief's monthly meetings.
    - b. Community outreach programs.
    - c. Criminal or traffic incidents/investigations.
    - d. Department ceremonies.
    - e. Information relative to victims, witnesses and suspects.
    - f. Special events.

5. Arrange and assist at press conferences.

B. Unless otherwise authorized by the chief of police, requests reference personnel issues and internal investigations, other than dispositions of an internal, shall be forwarded to the city's legal department.

C. All personnel matters pending litigation shall be referred to the city's legal department.

#### **54.1.2 SPOKESPERSON**

A. As needed, the PIO may designate a spokesperson to act on his/her behalf. Spokespersons are generally assigned based upon familiarity with media relations and knowledge of a specific subject matter.

B. Supervisory members of the department are authorized to provide general information that is consistent with this policy. Supervisors supplying information to the media shall provide their name. The supervisors shall then notify the PIO of the information provided.

#### **54.1.3 FIELD RESPONSE**

A. If the PIO/spokesperson is not available at the scene of such incidents, then it shall be the responsibility of the on-duty supervisor to respond to the media as his/her workload permits.

B. Requests for a field response shall be made if the incident has the potential to generate significant media attention and/or the media is interfering with operations.

#### **54.1.4 PIO NOTIFICATION**

The on-duty supervisor shall inform communications to notify the PIO of incidents that may generate media attention and as soon as practicable, the supervisor shall brief the PIO of the incident.

#### **54.1.5 MULTIPLE JURISDICTIONS**

When a coordinated effort is made with other agencies, it shall generally be the responsibility of the agency having primary jurisdiction to release any information.

#### **54.1.6 PRESS VISITS**

A. Members of the media are welcome at the department. It may be advantageous for members of the media to maintain a regular schedule so that the PIO is available to assist in obtaining information as requested.

B. The Elgin Police Department does not issue its own press credentials; however, access to the scene of an incident or to the department may be limited for any of the following reasons:

1. Dangerous or irresponsible conduct at a crime scene or other police operation.
2. Failure to follow the reasonable directions of an officer.
3. Interference with a police investigation.
4. Obstruction of the criminal justice process.
5. Violation of city, state or federal law.
6. Other unethical or unprofessional conduct as determined by the chief of police.

#### **54.1.7 ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS: RELEASABLE INFORMATION**

- A. The following information may be released during an ongoing investigation:
1. Name and age of an arrestee, a brief general description of the circumstances of the arrest and the name of investigating officer.
  2. Confirmation that a named individual was arrested, issued a citation or a notice to appear on a specific date for a specific offense.
  3. Name, address and physical description of a suspect being sought when there is a warrant on file and such release would not impede the service of such a warrant.
  4. General information that would help in the apprehension of a suspect such as a physical description, but not the name and address.
  5. Posed photographs of a suspect (driver's license photo, mug photo, etc.) or any other photo if it would aid in the apprehension or resolution of a case.
- B. Those that inquire on conviction information shall confer with the respective county clerk's office.

#### **54.1.8 NO PENDING INVESTIGATION: RELEASABLE INFORMATION**

The following information may be released from a general police report not requiring an investigation:

- A. Provide the age and confirm the date of birth, if requested.
- B. Sex and race.
- C. Names of witnesses or victims in non-criminal cases such as fires or crashes.
- D. Traffic crash information involving a juvenile when no custody/arrest is made.
- E. Information revealing the identity of adult offenders and if there is known relationship between the offender and the juvenile victim.
- F. Business names, addresses and the names of the owners.
- G. Information which has been provided to any other non-law enforcement entity or person.
- H. Information consented to in writing, or requested in writing, by the person who provided the information, or to whom the information pertains.
- I. Upon being charged, results of examinations, tests, DUI information or refusal of the accused to submit to any examinations or tests.
- J. Posed photographs of a suspect such as driver's license photo, mug photo or any other photo

#### **54.1.9 INFORMATION TO BE WITHHELD**

The following information shall not be released without prior approval from the public information officer or the chief of police.

- A. Information that would directly reveal the identity of a confidential informant.
- B. Release of information that would directly and clearly endanger the physical safety of any person.

- C. The identity or specific street address of any witness or victim of a violent or gang related crime.
- D. Information on victims of sex offenses, domestic violence, abuse and/or neglect.
- E. Information which would reveal the identity of a juvenile victim in non-traffic cases including the specific relationship between the offender and the juvenile victim.
- F. Information which would directly and clearly compromise the security of the police department.
- G. Acknowledgment of and/or contents of any statements or confessions made by a defendant, victim or witness.
- H. Records that relate to a juvenile who has been arrested or taken into custody and/or who is identified as an offender.
- I. Statements made by department personnel as to the credibility or guilt of an individual, as well as any opinion of personnel regarding the merits of the case or the quality of the evidence gathered.

#### **54.1.10 MEDIA ACCESS: MAJOR INCIDENTS**

- A. Media requests for information at major scenes, such as fires, natural disasters or other catastrophic events should be directed to the PIO unless circumstances exist that would dictate other actions.
- B. In the case of major events, the department will designate a specific on-scene area for the media. The PIO/spokesperson will be available at the on-scene area to answer questions and release statements.
- C. All media representatives are required to observe crime scene perimeters, unless otherwise directed by the PIO/spokesperson or on-scene supervisor.

#### **54.1.11 DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES**

In developing public information policies, the department will allow local media to provide input and suggestions. This should assist in maintaining effective mutual working relationships.