
	<b>MESQUITE POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>
	<b>115.00 PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER</b>
	<b>Effective Date: August, 2011</b>
	<b>Approved:</b> _____  <b>Chief of Police</b>

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish and describe the department's policies, procedures, and responsibilities for the Public Information Officer (PIO).

## POLICY

The Mesquite Police Department will strive to provide the news media and public with all information to which they are entitled by law.

### I. Command and Accountability

- A. The PIO is the primary spokesperson for the Mesquite Police Department.
- B. The PIO will report directly to the Chief of Police.
- C. The Chief of Police will designate the PIO and alternate PIO.

### II. Introduction

- A. Trust, cooperation and mutual respect between police and the news media is essential to realize the common objective of serving and informing the public. The goal of the Mesquite Police Department is to achieve the highest possible degree of cooperation with members of the media while projecting the best possible image of the department.
- B. Information will be released as required under provisions of the Texas Open Records Act, Attorney General's ORD Opinions, court decisions, federal law, etc.
- C. The department will make information on crimes and other incidents generally available to the news media unless such information is legally privileged or would violate the constitutional rights of an accused or is otherwise specifically prohibited.

### III. Duties

- A. The PIO will assist media personnel in the daily activities of covering routine news stories as well as at the scene of incidents.
- B. The Watch Commander will be responsible for notifying the PIO of major events. The PIO is not required to be on-call at any specific time, but an attempt should be made to notify the PIO of major events. In the event the PIO or his alternate is unavailable, the Watch Commander will be responsible for handling media inquiries.

### IV. Notifications

- A. It is the responsibility of the Watch Commander to promptly notify the PIO in case of a major event that will likely receive local or widespread media attention. Examples would be:
  1. death or serious injury or critical incident involving a police officer or department employee,
  2. any officer involved shooting resulting in injury to any person,
  3. homicide or wounding where death appears imminent,
  4. kidnapping or verified abduction,
  5. any prisoner escape from the MPD holding facility,
  6. barricaded person or hostage situation,
  7. missing persons when foul play is feared or when an extensive search is involved.
- B. News Releases:
  1. The PIO will have primary responsibility for preparing and distributing news releases. If the PIO and his alternate are unavailable and a release is needed, the Watch Commander is responsible for preparing a release.

2. The PIO will coordinate and authorize release of information concerning victims, witnesses and suspects in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act and the Texas Family Code.
  3. Releasing names of juveniles involved in offenses and the names of sexual assault victims is generally prohibited. The CID lieutenant will be consulted before releasing witness information or the release of suspect identification prior to arrest, filing of charges, or issuance of a warrant.
  4. The PIO will coordinate efforts with the City PIO when the information to be released concerns more than one department of the City of Mesquite.
  5. The PIO does not receive or process Open Records requests. Open Records requests are processed through the City Secretary's Office.
- V. Media Policy Revisions
- A. The Mesquite Police Department is committed to maintain progressive policies and procedures for media relations.
  - B. The PIO will work with local media to maintain such policies and periodically review policies.
- VI. Inter-agency Events
- A. The PIO will work with representatives from any other agency involved in any event that also involves the Mesquite Police Department.
  - B. The agency with primary jurisdiction will take the lead role in media relations and release of information.
  - C. The Mesquite Police Department will offer assistance where needed at the request of the primary agency.
  - D. Any information released by the Mesquite Police Department will be cleared through the appropriate representative of the agency of primary jurisdiction first.
- VII. Crime Scenes and Major Events
- A. In the case of a prolonged incident, the PIO should brief the media at regular, scheduled intervals.
  - B. Media representatives will be given a designated media location at the site of major incidents, when practical. Safety precautions will govern the exact location of the media area, but considerations will be made for line-of-site and camera angle possibilities.

EFFECTIVE: April, 1986; REVISED: September, 1990; FORMERLY: B/86-62; REVISED: January, 1996; REVISED: March, 1997; REVISED: August, 2003; REVISED: August, 2011