

# SPRINGFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Standard Operating Guideline

<b>Effective Date:</b> 01/23/2020	<b>Supersedes Policy Dated:</b> 10/15/2014	<b>Rescinds:</b>	<b>SOG Number:</b>
<b>Accreditation Index:</b> 41.2.4, 54.1.3 <sup>1</sup>			<b>302.3</b>
<b>Part Title:</b> Support Services		<b>Chapter Title:</b> Community Relations	
<b>Chief of Police:</b>			

## News Media Relations

### I Policy

It is the desire of the Springfield Police Department to answer questions about activities concerning the Department and to constantly strive for an atmosphere of cooperation with the news media. A citizen's right to know and understand circumstances surrounding current events in the community is recognized by this Department. Furthermore, the Department recognizes the responsible role of the news media in educating and informing the citizens of the community. However, in order to protect the rights of an accused person, victim or witness, or because the information is legally privileged, the release of information must conform to standards established in this Standard Operating Guideline.

### II Definitions

News Media – Properly identified representatives who are directly employed by local, national and international news organizations. The Springfield Police Department does not issue press credentials.

News Incidents – Activities and events deemed newsworthy by the public or by news media representatives.

Public Affairs Office – The primary duties of the Public Affairs Office consist of assisting members of the news media in gathering information about incidents investigated by the department and directing the agency's community relations programs. <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Accreditation Index - removed references to 5<sup>th</sup> Edition throughout the document.

<sup>2</sup> Definitions - Public Affairs Office, revised language.

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

Public Affairs Officer (PAO) – Member(s) of the Police Department’s Public Affairs Office specifically directed or authorized to distribute information to the news media concerning specific events or other departmental operations. <sup>3</sup>

PAO Designee – Employee(s) authorized by a commander to temporarily act as the PAO. The PAO Designee shall be relieved by a member of the Police Public Affairs Office as soon as practical.

Crime Scene or Incident Scene – Any area inside of barriers marked with standard yellow "police line" tape, ropes, traffic pylons or barricades, or otherwise denoted by a police officer as a crime scene, incident scene or hazardous area. <sup>4</sup>

## **III Procedure**

### **1 GENERAL <sup>5</sup>**

#### **1.1 Release Authority**

1.1.1 As a general rule, public information may be released by the Chief of Police, commanders, supervisors and the PAO in accordance with this guideline and SOG 303.1 - Public Information.

1.1.1(a) Central Records personnel may release routine written reports as allowed by SOG 303.1 - Public Information.

1.1.1(b) Other employees may release certain information in accordance with this Standard Operating Guideline.

#### **1.2 Release of Policy and Personnel Information**

1.2.1 Information pertaining to Springfield Police Department policy and personnel issues shall be released only by the Chief of Police or designee, and then only in accordance with applicable laws and merit rules.

#### **1.3 PAO Notification Responsibility**

1.3.1 It is the responsibility of all employees to keep the PAO regularly advised of new programs, outstanding achievements, current events, investigative developments, or any other situation of newsworthy information that will assist in maintaining an informed, aggressive and factual media relations program.

1.3.2 All employees should cooperate fully with the PAO by providing requested information in a clear and timely manner.

#### **1.4 Media Interview Requests**

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3 Definitions, PAO Designee, revised language, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

4 Definitions, Crime Scene or Incident Scene, revised language and descriptions, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

5 Section 1, Changed titles of subsections, revised language, combined sub-sections from other sections and corrected punctuation to meet required formatting, Per Policy Change Order 19-013.

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- 1.4.1 In the interest of accuracy and continuity, any request for a news interview (or oral releases of information) made to any member of this department below the rank of supervisor shall be directed to the employee's immediate supervisor or the PAO.
- 1.4.2 The supervisor or PAO should routinely handle most requests for interviews regarding significant news events. However, the supervisor may allow the employee conducting the investigation or handling the event to make a statement to the press in certain circumstances.
  - 1.4.2(a) Exceptions:
    - 1.4.2(a.1) An employee at the scene may release immediate information pertaining to public safety until relieved by a supervisor or a PAO.
    - 1.4.2(a.2) An employee may routinely release information (in accordance with SOG 303.1- Public Information) regarding crashes unless they involve a death, likelihood of death, or a city employee operating a city vehicle.
- 1.4.3 When conducting an interview with the news media, employees shall maintain a professional attitude and appearance.
  - 1.4.3(a) All employees should refrain from eating, drinking, chewing gum or using tobacco products during interviews.
- 1.4.4 When an interview pertaining to a major news event is given by an officer in the field, that officer shall notify the PAO.
  - 1.4.4(a) Placing such information on the Daily Summary may serve as notification to the PAO
- 1.5 Releases of Information
  - 1.5.1 Information should be released to the news media in a timely manner, keeping in mind the rights of privacy, safety of involved persons, legal limitations, or other legitimate factors.
  - 1.5.2 If requested information cannot be released, the reason for denial shall be explained.
- 1.6 Exclusives
  - 1.6.1 Under no circumstances shall information be withheld, delayed or selectively released to favor any particular news agency or media representative.
  - 1.6.2 Specific inquiries made independently by media representatives may be honored at the time of inquiry: however, if the information is related to a forthcoming news release intended for all news media agencies, it is incumbent on the Springfield Police Department to inform the reporter making the inquiry.
- 1.7 Requests for police reports
  - 1.7.1 Central Records will be responsible for maintaining the "media basket" and for honoring lawful requests from the news media for copies of written reports.
- 1.8 Department Courtesy

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

1.8.1 Department employees shall act in an amicable manner when dealing with representatives of the news media.

## **2 INFORMATION RELEASE PROCEDURES <sup>6</sup>**

2.1 The Police Department shall maintain a procedure where the news media may obtain information on matters of public interest in a manner that does not hamper office operations and is within legal guidelines.

### **2.2 Restrictions on the release of information**

2.2.1 The decision to release information or to grant interviews will be made based upon the facts of each incident.

2.2.2 Certain information may be withheld from the media to protect the constitutional rights of an accused individual, to avoid interfering with a departmental investigation, because it is legally privileged, or if it has not been verified as accurate and factual.

2.2.3 For additional guidelines concerning the release of information, refer to SOG 303.1 - Public Information.

### **2.3 Media Access (CALEA 54.1.3)**

2.3.1 News media representatives shall have reasonable access to employees of the Police Department, provided that reporting activities do not interfere with the official purpose and mission of the department.

2.3.2 Department commanders shall be responsible for establishing guidelines pertaining to physical access of media representatives to the sections and units under each respective commander's control.

2.3.3 Problems that arise between news media representatives and employees of the Police Department shall be referred to the PAO or designee.

### **2.4 Investigations Involving Other Agencies**

2.4.1 When the Springfield Police Department is involved in joint activities with other agencies, media releases and press conferences will be coordinated by the PAO or designee.

2.4.2 In most cases, unless otherwise directed by the Chief of Police, the agency having primary jurisdiction shall handle the release of information to the news media.

### **2.5 Joint Information Center (JIC)**

2.5.1 When a catastrophic event occurs that requires a major response from other emergency services (e.g. the Emergency Management Office, City of Springfield Public Information Office, Fire Department, Red

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<sup>6</sup> Section 2, retitled section, revised and reorganized sections, revised language and re-numbered sub-sections, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

### **SOG 302.3**

#### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

Cross, City Utilities, etc.) a cooperatively formed "Joint Information Center" may be needed.

- 2.5.1(a) When possible, the PAO should work through the City's Public Information Office to establish a Joint Information Center.
- 2.5.2 The JIC establishes a system where the media may receive relevant information from a centralized source.
  - 2.5.2(a) The establishment of the JIC should act as a rumor control center and reduce the chances of conflicting information reaching the public from different agencies.
  - 2.5.2(b) The JIC is not intended to prevent individual departments or agencies from commenting on their own operations.
- 2.5.3 When working in concert with public information officers from the other involved emergency services agencies, the following should be addressed when creating a JIC:
  - 2.5.3(a) Establishment of a centralized physical location for the JIC;
  - 2.5.3(b) Proper communications equipment (phone lines, facsimile machines, etc.);
  - 2.5.3(c) Designation of a person to coordinate the release of information from all official sources;
  - 2.5.3(d) Identification of the official spokesperson for each agency;
  - 2.5.3(e) Providing background data;
  - 2.5.3(f) Coordination of information;
  - 2.5.3(g) Preparation and dissemination of information.

### **3 PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICER <sup>7</sup>**

- 3.1 News media relations functions shall be assigned to the Department's Public Affairs Officer (PAO), under the authority of the Chief of Police.
- 3.2 Primary responsibility for planning, developing, writing and distributing news releases and articles about programs and activities of the Springfield Police Department rests solely with the Public Affairs Officer or designee.
  - 3.2.1 The PAO may, on occasion, delegate such responsibilities to another employee.

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<sup>7</sup> Section 3, section retitled, edited and reorganized. Punctuation edited in entire section to meet required formatting, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- 3.3 The PAO shall have the duty, responsibility and authority to do the following:
  - 3.3.1 Serve as the central source of information about the department and respond to requests for such information by members of the public;
  - 3.3.2 Act as spokesperson for the department at the request of the Chief of Police or a department commander, or in accordance with this Standard Operating Guideline;
  - 3.3.3 May, under most circumstances, elect to handle requests for an interview from the news media at their discretion;
    - 3.3.3(a) The PAO shall consult with the Chief of Police or designee concerning incidents involving internal affairs or other sensitive issues before releasing information or conducting an interview.
  - 3.3.4 May designate another employee of the department to facilitate a request from the media;
  - 3.3.5 May respond to the scene of any media event involving the Springfield Police Department;
  - 3.3.6 Prepare, write and distribute routine and special news releases;
  - 3.3.7 Assume a pro-active role in contacting the news media with information about the Department that might not otherwise come to their attention, but is newsworthy;
  - 3.3.8 Arrange and present, or assist at news conferences concerning departmental activities;
  - 3.2.9 Provide proper security for these news conferences;
  - 3.2.10 Deliver emergency news announcements concerning important breaking stories via e-mail, social media, and the media line;
  - 3.3.11 Facilitate media relations in emergency or crisis situations.
- 3.4 Notification of the PAO
  - 3.4.1 Supervisory personnel shall inform the PAO of significant changes in operations, procedures and personnel.
  - 3.4.2 Personnel should inform the PAO of newsworthy information concerning promotions, projects, programs, or other activities.
    - 3.4.2(a) Notification should be in writing when possible and made well in advance of the effective date when possible.
      - 3.4.2(a.1) When time does not permit, or there is an urgent need to release the information, personnel may forward the information by phone or in person as soon as possible.
  - 3.4.3 Planned major incidents including raids, multiple arrests, and high-profile search warrants should include the advance notification of the PAO, or designee, to allow for proper planning for dissemination of information to the news media.

### **SOG 302.3**

#### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- 3.4.3(a) Notification of the PAO is the responsibility of the highest-ranking officer in charge of such an operation.
- 3.4.4 The PAO should notify the City's Public Information Office of news conferences, media briefings or issues that may be of major interest to the City Manager's office.
- 3.4.5 News incidents of significant interest to the community require the immediate notification (24 hours a day) of the PAO or designee. The supervisor in charge of the incident is responsible for ensuring the notification is made. (CALEA 41.2.4)
  - 3.4.5(a) Crimes or incidents that would require notification of the PAO include the following:
    - 3.4.5(a.1) Disasters resulting in the loss of life or extensive property damage (such as tornadoes, floods, earthquakes, building collapses and explosions);
    - 3.4.5(a.2) Aircraft crashes or train derailments involving injuries, death or a threat to the community;
    - 3.4.5(a.3) Incidents involving hazardous materials which pose a threat to public safety (such as a propane or explosives truck crash, or a natural gas pipeline rupture);
    - 3.4.5(a.4) Death of a person in custody;
    - 3.4.5(a.5) School bus crashes involving serious injuries or death;
    - 3.4.5(a.6) Active searches for missing or wanted persons involving extensive use of personnel;
    - 3.4.5(a.7) Strikes, riots and other public disorders;
    - 3.4.5(a.8) Shootings involving Springfield police officers, or any other law enforcement agency if the shooting occurs inside the city limits of Springfield;
    - 3.4.5(a.9) Any on-duty injury to a department employee where hospitalization is required;
    - 3.4.5(a.10) Kidnappings;
    - 3.4.5(a.11) Homicides;
    - 3.4.5(a.12) Hostage and barricade situations where life is threatened or endangered over an

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- extended period of time, or when the Special Response Team is requested;
      - 3.4.5(a.13) Incidents involving persons who are of interest to the public;
      - 3.4.5(a.14) Arrival of news media at any major incident scene;
      - 3.4.5(a.15) Police pursuits involving a serious injury or death;
      - 3.4.5(a.16) Incidents that require the call-out of the Chief of Police.
- 3.5 Response to Crime/Incident scenes by the PAO
  - 3.5.1 After consulting with the supervisor in charge of the incident, the PAO may elect to respond to the scene to facilitate news media inquiries.
  - 3.5.2 Prior to the arrival of the PAO, supervisors on the scene of the incident may coordinate the release of basic information in accordance to established guidelines.
  - 3.5.3 If the PAO does not respond, or is unavailable, the watch commander, a PAO designee or the supervisor in charge of the incident shall respond to inquiries from the news media as set forth by Standard Operating Guideline.
- 3.6 Notification of the City's Public Information Office
  - 3.6.1 The PAO shall notify the City's Public Information office (24 hours a day) if any of the following incidents occur:
    - 3.6.1(a) Disaster resulting in the loss of life or extensive property damage (such as a tornado, flood, earthquake, building collapse or explosion);
    - 3.6.1(b) Aircraft crash or train derailment involving injuries, death or a threat to the community;
    - 3.6.1(c) Incident involving hazardous materials which poses a threat to public safety (such as a propane or explosives truck crash, or a natural gas pipeline rupture);
    - 3.6.1(d) School bus crash involving serious injuries or death;
    - 3.6.1(e) Shooting involving a Springfield police officer, or any other law enforcement agency if the shooting occurred inside the city limits of Springfield.
  - 3.6.2 If the PAO does not respond, the watch commander should ensure that the City's PIO is notified (417-380-3352).

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

#### 4 NEWS RELEASES <sup>8</sup>

- 4.1 The Springfield Police Department shall issue written news releases concerning department activity when deemed appropriate by the Public Affairs Officer, a supervisor, a commander, or the Chief of Police.
- 4.2 News releases will be in written format and shall be issued using the CivicPlus newsflash module.
- 4.3 When available, the PAO should be utilized to compose and disseminate news releases and to set up press conferences.
- 4.4 Unless exceptional circumstances exist, news releases must be approved by the Chief of Police, a commander or Public Affairs Officer prior to distribution.
  - 4.4.1 Supervisors may make or authorize a written press release in the following situations:
    - 4.4.1(a) If the Public Affairs Officer is unavailable and there is an immediate and significant interest to the safety of the community or the public's need to know:
    - 4.4.1(b) To disseminate information about traffic-related issues due to events such as:
      - 4.4.1(b.1) Hazardous road conditions caused by snow, ice, or flooding.
      - 4.4.1(b.2) Lengthy, but temporary road closures, traffic congestions, or detours resulting from vehicle crashes or other traffic hazards;
      - 4.4.1(b.3) Malfunctioning traffic signals;
      - 4.4.1(b.4) Fatality traffic crashes.
- 4.5 News releases should contain the date the release was issued, a name and phone number for the media representatives to contact for further information and the name of the person who authorized the release.
- 4.6 When a news release is made, the employee issuing the release shall ensure that the release is made equally available to all legitimate news media representatives.
- 4.7 As soon as practical after a news release has been issued, the person making the release will forward a copy of the release to Police Department personnel by sending a department-wide e-mail.

#### 5 SOCIAL MEDIA <sup>9</sup>

- 5.1 All department social media sites or pages must be approved by the Chief of Police.

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<sup>8</sup> Section 3, section retitled and edited entire section to current formatting, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

<sup>9</sup> Section 5, section edited, renumbered and reorganized. Punctuation edited in entire section to meet required formatting, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- 5.1.1 The PAO will be the primary administrator for the department's social media accounts.
  - 5.1.2 Other department employees may be given administrator rights to these accounts, with approval of their Bureau Commander.
  - 5.2 Social media may be used to post news releases, crime stoppers information, missing/wanted persons, upcoming events, surveillance photos, traffic conditions, public service announcements, or any other information believed to be of interest to the citizens of Springfield.
    - 5.2.1 All social media content shall adhere to applicable laws, regulations, and policies, including those pertaining to information technology and records management.
  - 5.3 Department personnel who post information to the department's social media sites shall:
    - 5.3.1 Conduct themselves as a representative of the department, adhering to the department's code of conduct and observe conventionally accepted protocols and proper decorum;
    - 5.3.2 Observe and abide by all copyright, trademark and service mark restrictions in posting materials to electronic media.
  - 5.4 Department personnel who post information to the department's social media sites shall not:
    - 5.4.1 Make statements about the guilt or innocence of any suspect or arrestee, or comments about pending prosecutions;
    - 5.4.2 Post, transmit, or otherwise disseminate confidential information including photographs or videos related to department training, activities, or work-related assignments without express written permission;
    - 5.4.3 Conduct political activities or private business on department social media sites.
- 6 CRIME AND INCIDENT SCENE ACCESS <sup>10</sup>(CALEA 54.1.3)
- 6.1 General Access
    - 6.1.1 Department personnel will extend every courtesy possible to members of legitimate news agencies who are at a scene of a major incident for the purpose of covering it. Such incidents may include major crime scenes, major fires, natural disasters and other catastrophic events.
      - 6.1.1(a) SOGs 103.1 Code of Conduct 402.2 - Crime Scene Management and 303.1 - Public Information shall also be observed.

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<sup>10</sup> Section 6, section edited, renumbered and reorganized. Punctuation edited in entire section to meet required formatting, per Policy Change Order 19-013.

## **SOG 302.3**

### News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- 6.2 Media Entry into a Crime/Incident Scene
  - 6.2.1 No member of the media shall be allowed access inside a crime scene, major fire, natural disaster, or other catastrophic event scene without permission from the on-scene commander, and then only when accompanied by the PAO, commander, or their designee.
  - 6.2.2 If a crime scene encompasses private property, permission from the owner(s) or their representatives must be obtained when photographs, video or other recordings are to be taken on or inside the area of private ownership.
  - 6.2.3 The PAO, or in their absence, the on-scene commander will make an effort to accommodate reasonable requests from the media.
- 6.3 Media Staging Area
  - 6.3.1 The on-scene supervisor in charge should determine if a media staging area is needed.
  - 6.3.2 When appropriate, a media staging area should be established that provides for the safety of news media representatives, police officers and other persons involved in the incident.
  - 6.3.3 If needed, the on-scene supervisor shall establish a safe location.
  - 6.3.4 The PAO may change this location upon arrival, or at any other time deemed appropriate.
  - 6.3.5 Media mobility shall not be restricted outside the perimeters of the crime scene or incident scene unless such mobility will endanger life or property, or the investigation itself.
- 6.4 Photographers and Videographers outside crime scene
  - 6.4.1 Police personnel shall not prevent citizens or media representatives, located outside a designated crime/incident scene from photographing or video recording persons or objects inside the scene, even in instances where this department would not release to the media photographs of such persons or scenes.
  - 6.4.2 Department members shall take no action to assist nor discourage the news media in making photographs or obtaining other information, except as provided by law.
  - 6.4.3 The provisions of Sections 6.4.2 and 6.4.3 do not allow citizens or the media to enter the crime incident scene or proceed past scene barriers without permission.
- 6.5 Temporary Flight Restrictions
  - 6.5.1 The supervisor in charge of a crime scene or incident scene may request that the FAA impose temporary flight restrictions (FAA rule 91.91) over the scene when such activity would pose a threat to people on the ground or to airborne aircraft.

### **SOG 302.3**

News Media Relations

Effective Date: 01/23/2020

- 6.5.1(a) Example: Prop wash from an airplane or helicopter might spread vapors from a tanker truck leaking chlorine gas.
  - 6.5.2 Under most conditions, these restrictions would not apply to aircraft used for rescue efforts. To request implementation of the temporary flight restrictions, the supervisor should contact the FAA at the Springfield-Branson National Airport (417-869-5284).
- 6.6 Media Pool
  - 6.6.1 In rare instances, a "media pool" may need to be established.
  - 6.6.2 When conditions are so dangerous or confining as to limit the number of media representatives that can be accommodated at a certain area or event, a media pool should be established.
  - 6.6.3 The establishment of a media pool shall be facilitated by the PAO.

#### **IV Attachments**