



Series 300 Support	Effective Date 12/09/2022	Review Date Annually	Directive Number 302.5
Chapter 302 - Community Involvement			
Reviewing Office Media Relations			<input type="checkbox"/> New Directive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Revised <small>Revisions in italics</small>
References			

MEDIA RELATIONS

302.5 - 1 POLICY

The Detroit Police Department is committed to informing the community and the news media of events within the public domain which involve members of the department or which are handled by the department. All employees of the department are to cooperate as completely as possible with members of the news media, consistent with department policies and procedures. Media Relations is designated as the primary source of information concerning the activities of this department.

302.5 - 2 Department Public Speakers

Media Relations shall maintain a public speakers list. This list shall be comprised of the names of speakers within the department who possess expertise in specific subjects. Each commander shall delegate one or more members of *their* precinct or command as a public speaker for the department. All requests for a department speaker or speaking engagement shall be referred to Media Relations; however, the above procedure shall not preclude any individual member from submitting a request to speak as a department representative or speaker when personally requested by any person or organization within the city of Detroit.

302.5 - 2.1 Obtaining a Speaker

All speaking engagements for department speakers must take place within the limits of the city of Detroit except when otherwise directed by the Chief of Police. Requests shall be submitted in writing and shall contain the following information:

1. The specific day and date of the event and the name and type of organization making the request;
2. The time allotted for the actual speech and the time of the total engagement;
3. The specific topic to be presented along with a general description of the audience, e.g., senior citizens, juveniles, etc.; and
4. The name, return address and telephone number of the requester.

302.5 Media Relations**302.5 - 2.2 Speaking Regulations**

Members shall not solicit or accept remuneration for speaking engagements. Members shall adhere to departmental rules, regulations, orders or procedures affecting the content of public statements.

302.5 - 3 Media Relations Responsibility

Media Relations exists to assist the Detroit Police Department and the news media in the prompt dissemination of complete and accurate information to the public on police operations and services. Media Relations shall act as the clearinghouse and coordinator of news dissemination for the department, and shall act as liaison between the news media and the police department.

302.5 - 4 Contact with the News Media**302.5 - 4.1 Commanding Officers**

Every commanding officer has the authority as well as the responsibility, to respond directly to legitimate news inquiries, without prior approval, on operations of *their* command and matters of fact of which *they have* direct personal knowledge. If time permits, *they are* encouraged to confer with Media Relations.

Commanding officers are expected to be fully aware of any specific restraints placed by laws and courts on the release of information held to be prejudicial to building a case or conducting a fair trial or restraints that have been promulgated by department orders. Commanding officers are also responsible for seeing that all members of *their* command understand the specific restraints on certain types of information required by the courts and laws, or which have been promulgated by department orders.

302.5 - 4.2 Consulting Superior Officers

Members of the department who are uncertain about releasing information to the news media should seek advice from a higher authority starting with *their* immediate supervisor, if available. If officers are reluctant to answer questions because of doubt, they should say so, and not attribute *their* silence to a non-existent departmental restriction. Members should be careful to avoid representing *their* opinions as fact.

302.5 - 4.3 Development of Favorable Publicity

Department members who have ideas for feature stories that would generate favorable publicity for the department should not present such material on *their* own initiative to the news media. Such story ideas should be passed on to Media Relations for development and release.

302.5 - 4.4 Emergencies

Members of the department who are under the pressure of a fast-breaking crime situation have the right to postpone responding to a news inquiry until the urgency has

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passed. However, such action should be based on a genuine emergency, the newsperson should be told it is an emergency, and *they* should be answered promptly when the emergency is over.

302.5 - 4.5 Lack of Information

Members of the department who are asked for information beyond *their* range of knowledge are expected to say so and to refer the newsperson to the correct source.

302.5 - 4.6 Members are the Subject of Inquiries

In an instance where a department member has become the subject of an inquiry by the press, the member is free to refuse to be interviewed or to comment at *their* own discretion or upon the advice of counsel.

302.5 - 5 Crime News

302.5 - 5.1 Initial Crime Reports

Members having access to the reports may release information on initial crime reports verbally to the news media, on demand. However, the identity of witnesses, juvenile suspects, and victims of rape and child molestation shall not be released. Reporters shall be cautioned that initial crime reports are preliminary in nature and are not necessarily the last word as to the facts in the case.

302.5 - 5.2 Release of Information at Crime Scenes

All requests for information at the crime scene are to be directed to a Media Relations member, or the supervisor or officer-in-charge of the scene, who shall release essential factual information to the media.

302.5 - 5.3 Releasing Information after an Arrest

After an arrest, but before a warrant is issued, members may report that a suspect is in custody, without further identification, and may release the factual circumstances of the arrest, including time, place, and any pursuit, resistance, or use of weapons. After a warrant is issued, members may release basic factual information about the accused, including name, age, city of residence, and photograph. However, police identification numbers on photographs shall be deleted. If the suspect is a notorious individual with a widely publicized record of prior convictions, that record may also be released as already being a matter of broad public knowledge. If the suspect has not been arrested, members may release any additional identifying information that would contribute to *their* arrest.

302.5 - 5.4 Evidence

If evidence is found away from the crime scene linking a suspect with the crime, the fact that such evidence was found shall only be released by Media Relations members or by the supervisor or officer-in-charge of the scene, provided that such release will

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not jeopardize the case investigation in any way and provided that the actual evidence is not described.

302.5 - 5.5 Restrictions on Release of Information

Members of the department shall be careful that the information released is not prejudicial in nature. In general, members shall not:

1. Dramatize the details of a crime through inflammatory language or highly colored description, always allowing the objective facts to speak for themselves;
2. Prejudge or classify the nature of the crime;
3. Offer opinions or interpretations about the nature of any evidence and what it may suggest as to the guilt or innocence of a suspect;
4. Comment on the existence of any tests offered to, taken by, or refused by a suspect and should leave such disclosure to the discretion of the prosecutor's office;
5. Comment on the existence of a confession, statements or omissions;
6. Release the prior conviction record of a suspect when such information is not already a matter of public information through wide-spread publicity, until a warrant is issued;
7. Obstruct the legitimate freedom of operation of news photographers and television cameraperson;
8. Deliberately pose suspects in custody for photographing or televising by news media;
9. Permit interviews of suspects in custody, without the written permission of such suspects, after they have been officially notified of *their* legal rights to counsel and to refuse an interview;
10. Release the statements or comments of prospective witnesses or discuss *their* credibility;
11. Comment on the possibility of a plea of guilty to the offense charged or any lesser offense; and
12. Comment about the possible guilt or innocence of a particular suspect. The fact of arrest presumes the existence of evidence justifying an arrest. If a statement must be made, the prosecutor's office suggests this statement be given: "Our investigation has uncovered sufficient evidence to submit to the prosecutor for prosecution."

302.5 - 5.6 Civil Disturbances

Members of the department shall report the facts, as they know them, promptly, clearly and objectively, avoiding personal opinion, evaluation or inflammatory language. Calling a disturbance a "riot" is a matter of judgment to be avoided.

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Release of information in such circumstances shall follow the same criteria applied to crime news, keeping in mind that prompt release of the police version of the facts is important to balanced coverage by the media. If the identity of the member involved in the complaint is known, *they are* free to make a statement *on their own* behalf.

If a civil action has been recorded in the appropriate court, all inquiries shall be handled through the City of Detroit's Corporation Counsel's Office.

302.5 - 6 Written Request for Public Records

Sworn and non-sworn members receiving written requests for disclosure of public records shall determine if the request contains a sufficient description to identify the record. Some written requests will contain vague or erroneous descriptions of desired reports and records. *Incident* reports, Investigator's Reports, etc. may be referred to simply as "police reports." However, a diligent effort shall be made to define and locate the requested records within the command.

If, after thorough effort, the desired record cannot be determined because of a vague or incorrect description, or it is determined that the record is not located within the command, an Inter-Office Memorandum, (DPD568), detailing the efforts taken to define or search for the record along with the written request shall be forwarded to Legal Affairs.

Two (2) copies of any records pertaining to the request, which are located within the command, shall be forwarded with the written request to the *Legal Advisor*.

302.5 - 6.1 Recommendations Regarding Release of Records

Commands may make recommendations regarding release of records or requesting deletion of certain information by attaching an explanatory memorandum to the records.

302.5 - 6.2 Releasing Highly Sensitive Intelligence Information

In the event a request is made for highly sensitive intelligence information, commanding officers shall seek a review of the request by the appropriate deputy chief prior to forwarding the requested record to the *Legal Advisor*. Such review shall occur within two (2) days of receipt of the request.

302.5 - 6.3 Record Request Log Book

Each commands administration staff shall maintain a Log Book for all records forwarded to the *Legal Advisor* in compliance with this act. The following information shall be entered in the Log Book for each set of forwarded records: name and address of requesting person, description of requested records, date forwarded and name of member or employee who searched for and forwarded the records.