

## **1200.00 – Communication with the Media**

### **Policy:**

1. The Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) believes in fostering a positive relationship with the media. As such, members will reasonably cooperate with the media and public information will be provided to the media in an accurate, timely and detailed manner, consistent with the law, as well as public safety and administrative considerations.
2. The Public Information Officer (PIO) serves as the Agency's spokesperson, thus is responsible for managing the Communications Unit, and is entrusted with coordinating communications. The PIO must be aware of MCSO activities that fall under the realm of news and keep the Sheriff abreast of media interests.
3. It is the responsibility of all Sheriff's Office members to notify and coordinate communications with the PIO. Media inquiries relating to public safety incidents will be handled expeditiously by the member(s) in charge of the incident, or their designee(s), whenever the PIO is not available.
4. Members should work with the PIO to prepare and distribute communications of Agency interest (e.g. press releases, social media posts, website content, video topics, podcast discussions, print article subjects, information to be distributed at community meetings or to community outlets, awards and other promotions, etc.). Members are encouraged to contact the PIO with a positive story and provide relevant information/supporting materials accordingly.

### **Procedure:**

1. Notification of the Public Information Officer (PIO):
  - 1.1. The PIO is available to respond to any event, which creates a substantial interest and response by the media or when members require support with media relations. The PIO may be contacted by telephone or pager for immediate response, or by email for simple notification.
  - 1.2. Incidents that require PIO notification include, but are not limited to, :
    - 1.2.1. Corrections:
      - 1.2.1.1. Death in custody,
      - 1.2.1.2. Riot or disturbance in facility,
      - 1.2.1.3. Discharge of firearm in the line of duty,
      - 1.2.1.4. Transport or court appearances of high profile adults in custody,
      - 1.2.1.5. Activation of specialty units on MCSO missions (e.g. CERT, etc.), or
      - 1.2.1.6. Media requests to access MCSO facilities.
    - 1.2.2. Law Enforcement:
      - 1.2.2.1. All homicides and major crimes,
      - 1.2.2.2. Major incidents at large-scale events (e.g. parks, schools, shopping centers, etc.),
      - 1.2.2.3. Discharge of firearm in the line of duty, except when discharged for the purpose of euthanizing an injured animal,
      - 1.2.2.4. Serious hate/bias crimes,
      - 1.2.2.5. Activation of specialty units on MCSO missions (e.g. SWAT, CNT, SAR, RRT, Vehicular Crash Team, etc.), or
      - 1.2.2.6. Arrest of high profile persons (e.g. MCSO member, member of another public safety agency, elected official or their staff, etc.).
    - 1.2.3. Other:
      - 1.2.3.1. Serious injury or death of a member, or

1.2.3.2. Serious damage to County property.

1.3. Upon notification, the PIO will notify the Sheriff, Chief Deputies, and/or command members, as appropriate.

2. Directing Media Access on Scene and Releasing Information to the Media:

2.1. The Public Information Officer (PIO), will generally be the source of information about the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO), to the media. In the absence of the PIO, member(s) in charge of an incident, or their designee(s), may manage media access on scene and release information to the media in accordance with this Policy and Procedure.

2.2. Media access on scene should be:

2.2.1. Directed to a safe location (media staging location).

2.2.2. Denied or limited when media presence would unreasonably obstruct or interfere with the safety of any person, the carrying out of official duties, or an investigation (e.g. gathering evidence, interviewing victims/witnesses, etc.), until the member(s) in charge, or their designee(s), gives permission.

2.2.2.1. Members of the media do not have the right to enter private property without the consent of the property owner.

2.2.2.2. In hazardous areas, members of media may enter at their own risk, after reasonable level of order or control has been established and with the approval of the member(s) in charge or their designee(s).

2.3. Members will not prevent members of the media from broadcasting, taking pictures, or taking video if they have the lawful right to be at the location. Members may ask the media not to broadcast (from ground or airspace) live during an active tactical incident.

2.4. Member(s) in charge of an incident, or their designee(s), will ensure accurate information is released as soon as feasible, regardless of media deadlines, unless a specific time has been set for a news conference or the release of information is being handled by the PIO. The same information will be released to all media outlets.

2.5. Any member releasing information to the media shall notify the PIO about the nature of the request and the information released, by the end of their shift.

2.6. Off scene, a member may be contacted by the media requesting official records. Because media requests regarding official records (e.g. reports, photos, video, etc.), must be made in writing and reviewed in accordance with applicable public records law, members will direct any media requesting official records to the Communications Unit. Members should direct media requests for booking photos to the Corrections Records Unit.

**History:**

- Originating Policy/Procedure: 11/9/17
- Next Review Date: 11/9/19
- Review By: Communications Unit