
Media Relations

325.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for the release of official Sheriff's office information to the media. It also addresses coordinating media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities.

325.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Vigo County Sheriff's Office to protect the privacy rights of individuals when releasing non-confidential information to the media regarding topics of public concern. Information that has the potential to negatively affect investigations will not be released.

325.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Sheriff. In situations not warranting immediate notice to the Sheriff and in situations where the Sheriff has given prior approval, Commanders, Supervisors, deputies and designated personnel may prepare, complete the appropriate form ([see attachment](#)) and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and applicable laws regarding confidentiality. Completed copies of the form should be forwarded as soon as practical to the Patrol Commander, Sheriff or the authorized designee.

Most situations where the media show a strong interest are also of interest to the Sheriff, the affected Commander and the County. The following list of incident types is provided as a guide for notification and is not intended to be all-inclusive:

- Officer-involved shooting, whether on- or off-duty (see the Officer-Involved Shootings and Deaths Policy for special notification)
- Homicides, suspicious deaths or deaths related to law enforcement activity
- Crimes of unusual violence or circumstances that may include hostages, barricaded persons, home invasions, armed robbery or sexual assaults
- At-risk missing children or missing endangered adults
- In-custody deaths
- Aircraft, train, boat or other transportation accidents with major damage and/or injury or death
- Traffic accidents with fatalities or severe injuries
- Death of a prominent Vigo official
- Significant injury or death to a member of the Sheriff's Office, whether on- or off-duty
- Arrest of a member of the Sheriff's Office or prominent Vigo official
- Equipment failures, utility failures and incidents that may affect staffing or pose a threat to basic sheriff's services

Media Relations

- Any other incident that has attracted or is likely to attract significant media attention

325.4 PROVIDING ADVANCE INFORMATION

To protect the safety and rights of Sheriff's office members and other persons, advance information about planned actions by law enforcement personnel, such as movement of persons in custody or the execution of an arrest or search warrant, should not be disclosed to the media, nor should media representatives be invited to be present at such actions except with the prior approval of the Sheriff.

Any exceptions to the above should only be considered for the furtherance of legitimate law enforcement purposes. Prior to approving any exception, the Sheriff will consider, at a minimum, whether the release of information or the presence of the media would unreasonably endanger any individual or prejudice the rights of any person or is otherwise prohibited by law.

325.5 MEDIA REQUESTS

Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement incident shall be referred to the Patrol Commander, Sheriff, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor. Prior to releasing any information to the media, members shall consider the following:

- (a) At no time shall any member of this Sheriff's office make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from a supervisor or the Sheriff.
- (b) In situations involving multiple agencies or government departments, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to the release of any information by this Sheriff's office.
- (c) Under no circumstance should any member of this Sheriff's office make any comment to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this Sheriff's office without prior approval of a supervisor or the Sheriff. Under these circumstances the member should direct the media to the agency handling the incident.

325.6 ACCESS

Authorized media representatives shall be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities as required by law.

Access by the media is subject to the following conditions:

- (a) The media representative shall produce valid media credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.
- (b) Media representatives should be prevented from interfering and may be removed for interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
 1. Based upon available resources, reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere

Media Relations

with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the Sheriff or other designated spokesperson.

- (c) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody should not be permitted without the approval of the Sheriff and the express written consent of the person in custody.
- (d) No member of this Sheriff's office who is under investigation shall be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved member.

325.6.1 CRITICAL OPERATIONS

A critical incident or tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, except the media should not be permitted within the inner perimeter of the incident, subject to any restrictions as determined by the supervisor in charge. Sheriff's Office members shall not jeopardize a critical incident or tactical operation in order to accommodate the media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through a supervisor or the Sheriff.

325.6.2 TEMPORARY FLIGHT RESTRICTIONS

Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or member safety or significantly hamper incident operations, the field supervisor should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Supervisor. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident and should be requested through the appropriate control tower. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should be contacted (14 CFR 91.137).

325.7 CONFIDENTIAL OR RESTRICTED INFORMATION

It shall be the responsibility of the Sheriff to ensure that confidential or restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media (see the Records Maintenance and Release and Personnel Records policies). When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be consulted prior to releasing any information.

325.7.1 EMPLOYEE INFORMATION

The identities of deputies involved in shootings or other critical incidents may only be released to the media upon the consent of the involved deputy or upon a formal request filed.

Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in the information log (see the Information Log section in this policy), including the identity of deputies involved in shootings or other critical incidents, shall be referred to the Sheriff.

Requests should be reviewed and fulfilled by the Custodian of Records, or if unavailable, the Supervisor or the authorized designee. Such requests will be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Records Maintenance and Release Policy and the Indiana Public Records Act (I.C. § 5-14-3-1 et seq.).

Media Relations

325.8 RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The Sheriff's Office may routinely release information to the media without receiving a specific request. This may include media releases regarding critical incidents, information of public concern, updates regarding significant incidents or requests for public assistance in solving crimes or identifying suspects. This information may also be released through the Sheriff's office website or other electronic data sources.

325.8.1 INFORMATION LOG

The Sheriff's Office will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities. Log entries shall only contain information that is deemed public information and not restricted or confidential by this policy or applicable law. Upon request, the log entries shall be made available to media representatives through the Patrol Commander.

The daily information log will generally include:

- (a) The date, time, location, case number, type of crime, extent of injury or loss, and names of individuals involved in crimes occurring within this jurisdiction, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation, or the information is confidential (e.g., juveniles or certain victims).
- (b) The date, time, location, case number, name, birth date and charges for each person arrested by this Sheriff's office, unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation, or the information is confidential (e.g., juveniles).
- (c) The time and location of other significant law enforcement activities or requests for service with a brief summary of the incident.

325.9 TRAINING

Prior to releasing information to the public, any member designated to serve as the Sheriff should receive training relevant to the position.

Attachments

Media Release (1).pdf



SHERIFF GREG EWING

VIGO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE:

TIME:

.M.

REPORTING

DEPUTY:

TYPE OF INCIDENT:

LOCATION:

DETAILS / NARRATIVE:

VICTIM:

VICTIM'S ADDRESS:

SUSPECT:

SUSPECT'S ADDRESS:

IF MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT, WHERE THERE ANY INJURIES AND TO WHAT EXTENT?

Responding Agencies:

Officer's Names:

Were any parties transported to hospital? _____

Were seat belts / helmets worn _____

Were alcohol / drugs involved? _____

Were any citations issued? _____

Were any arrests made? _____