

Weber County Sheriff's Office		POLICY AND PROCEDURES	
SUBJECT: Public Information Functions		CHAPTER/SECTION NO.: 40.1, 40.2	
EFFECTIVE DATE:10/7/03		REVIEW DATE:	
AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: See attached sheet		APPROVED:** <u>See Master File</u> SHERIFF	
STANDARD NUMBER: 54.1.1			

40.1 Purpose

- 40.1.1 In a free society information is shared and public scrutiny is invited. The purposes of providing public information are to inform and educate the public on issues affecting the peace and safety of the community, and to allow the public to have an understanding of the general operations and objectives of the Weber County Sheriff's Office. Success in these two areas helps to develop public trust and support for law enforcement and deter crime.

40.2 Policy

- 40.2.1 This Office may handle potential situations the news media may be interested in by:
- A. Assisting news personnel in covering news stories.
 - B. Being available for on-call responses to the news media.
 - C. Preparing and distributing Office news releases.
 - D. Arranging for, and assisting at, news conferences.
 - E. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information.
 - F. Assisting in crisis situations within the Office.
 - G. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning investigations and operations of the Office, including those which are deemed confidential in nature.

40.2.2 News Media Releases

- A. News releases will be made when the Office has information it would like disseminated to the public or the information is likely to be of high public interest. When possible, news releases will be in writing to document what was released.
- B. Authorized persons making news releases, including scheduled news conferences, must whenever possible:
 - 1. ensure that the representatives of all recognized news organization are treated fairly and given reasonable access to public information.
 - 2. Notify news media other than local media, if the information would seem to make that action appropriate.
 - 3. Include the incident commander or his/her designee in any planning for a news release, or news conferences.
- C. The public information officer(PIO)is available by cell phone or through the dispatch center.
- D. If the public information officer is unable to respond to an incident, the incident commander will be responsible for news media and public releases.

40.2.3 Information for Release

- A. The PIO will, whenever possible, meet or speak with the incident commander or lead investigator in order to:
 - 1. Obtain accurate information,
 - 2. Coordinate the release of information,
 - 3. Prevent the release of redundant or inaccurate information,
 - 4. Prevent conflicting news releases,
 - 5. Prevent release of information that would jeopardize an investigation or the

safety of witnesses or prosecution of suspects.

- B. Information which may be available for release in ongoing criminal investigations, based on the status of each investigation, may include:
1. A defendant's name, age, description, residence, marital status, occupation, and similar background information. The names of juveniles **will not** be released.
 2. Arrest photos on file with the Weber County Corrections Division.
 3. Identity of the investigating and/or arresting officer(s), and what agency the officer(s) is(are) from.
 4. The immediate circumstances of the arrest including time and place, any pursuit, any possession or use of weapons, and the type and authority of any warrant.
 5. Descriptions of any item seized at the time of arrest may be made if that information will not compromise the ongoing investigation or prosecution of the suspect/s.
 6. The text and source of charges for an arrest. Unless the suspect has been convicted of the charges any release of information will indicate that the suspect stands accused but is not convicted of the crime.
 7. Arraignment date and any bond amount.
 8. A request for assistance in obtaining additional information.
- C. If a member other than the public information officer does a news release, the Sheriff's Office public information officer (P.I.O.) will be notified of information released to

the media as soon as possible by the member making the release.

D. Information not to be released in ongoing criminal investigations:

1. Prior criminal record; including arrest, indictments, or other charges of criminal activity, of a defendant.
2. Opinions or other statements as to the character, reputation, guilt, or innocence of the accused.
3. Existence or contents of any confession, admission, alibis, or other statements of the accused, or the refusal or failure of the accused to make any such statements.
4. Performance or results of investigative procedures or tests, such as fingerprints, polygraph examination, ballistic test, or other laboratory tests or examinations, or the refusal of the accused to take such tests or examinations.
5. Statements or opinions concerning the identity, address, testimony, or credibility of prospective witness(es).
6. Speculation regarding plea bargaining or other disposition of the charge or case.
7. Statements or opinions concerning evidence, physical or oral, or argument in the case, or whether or not it is anticipated such evidence or argument will be used at trial.
8. Name or location of the accused's employment, except if the location of the crime or arrest is the same.

9. Name or address of any victim of a sex offense; only the approximate location of where the offense took place should be released.
10. Name of juveniles suspected or arrested.
11. Exact amount of cash or specific description of any items taken in a robbery or burglary, unless a detailed description is needed to assist in recovery.
12. Information or inquiries regarding causes of a victim's death in a death investigation will be referred to the medical examiner's office until the medical examiner authorizes release of that information. Arrival at the death scene and pronouncement of death by a doctor is not authorization to release the name.
13. Any information concerning an internal investigation, including the existence of such an investigation, without the express authorization of the Sheriff.
14. Interviews with, or posed photographs of, an accused person in custody, unless express permission from the County Attorney is obtained.
15. Anyone asking for information that may not be made public will be granted an explanation of why the information is being withheld. For example, explaining rights to privacy and the necessity for avoiding prejudicial pretrial publicity.

40.2.4 Release of information when other agencies are involved.

- A. When other agencies are involved in a mutual effort with this Office, the agency having primary jurisdiction should be responsible for coordinating the release of information.

- B. Members of the Office will coordinate, as appropriate, the release of public information with other agencies involved in a mutual effort.
- C. Requests for information by other agencies should be submitted in written form (Office approved request form or outside agency letterhead) to a Central Services Section clerk.

40.2.5 Release of information regarding crisis situations within the Sheriff's Office.

- A. Crisis situations within the Office include but are not limited to: death of an officer, fire or other serious damage to facilities, any incident with serious impact on the Office and personnel.
- B. All information releases will be authorized by the Sheriff or his designee.
- C. The Office PIO will coordinate all information releases with the Traumatic Incident Corp Team (TIC).