Media Relations

323.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE
This policy provides guidelines for media releases and media access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other law enforcement activities.

323.2 RESPONSIBILITIES
The ultimate authority and responsibility for the release of information to the media shall remain with the Chief of Police, however, in situations not warranting immediate notice to the Chief of Police and in situations where the Chief of Police has given prior approval, Division Commanders, Watch Commanders, supervisors, and designated Public Information Officer(s) may prepare and release information to the media in accordance with this policy and the applicable law.

323.2.1 MEDIA REQUEST
Any media request for information or access to a law enforcement situation shall be referred to the first available supervisor or designated PIO. Prior to releasing any information to the media, employees shall consider the following:

(a) At no time shall any employee of this Department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from a supervisor or the designated PIO.

(b) In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies, 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 Department.

(c) Under no circumstance should any member of this Department make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police.

323.3 MEDIA ACCESS
Authorized members of the media shall be provided access to scenes of a flood, storm, fire, earthquake, explosion, accident, or other disaster subject to the following conditions (Penal Code § 409.5(d)):

(a) The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.

(b) Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations, which includes command posts for these operations (409.5(b) PC).

1. Reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the Department Public Information Officer or other designated spokesperson.
2. Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or officer safety or significantly hampers incident operations, the field supervisor should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Watch Commander. 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 should be contacted (14 CFR 91.137).

(c) No member of this Department who is under investigation shall be subjected to media visits or interviews without the consent of the involved employee (Government Code § 3303(e)).

(d) Media interviews with individuals who are in custody should not be permitted without the approval of the Chief of Police and the express consent of the person in custody.

A tactical operation should be handled in the same manner as a crime scene, subject to any restrictions as determined by the supervisor in charge. Department members shall not jeopardize a tactical operation in order to accommodate the news media. All comments to the media shall be coordinated through a supervisor or the Public Information Officer.

323.4 SCOPE OF INFORMATION SUBJECT TO RELEASE
The Department will maintain a daily information log of significant law enforcement activities that shall be made available, upon request, to media representatives through the Watch Commander. This log will generally contain the following information:

(a) The date, time, location, case number, type of crime, extent of injury or loss, and names of individuals (except confidential informants and their city and state of residence), 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.

(b) The date, time, location, case number, name, city and state of residence, birth date and charges for each person arrested by this department unless the release of such information would endanger the safety of any individual or jeopardize the successful completion of any ongoing investigation.

(c) The time and location of other significant law enforcement activities or requests for service with a brief summary of the incident subject to the restrictions of this policy and applicable law.

At no time shall identifying information pertaining to a juvenile arrestee (13 years of age and under), victim or witness be publicly released without prior approval of a competent court. The identity of a minor 14 years of age or older shall not be publicly disclosed unless the minor has been arrested for a serious felony and the release of such information has been approved by the Chief of Police (Welfare and Institutions Code § 827.5).

Identifying information concerning deceased individuals shall not be released to the media until notification of next of kin or otherwise cleared through the Coroner's Office.
Media Relations

Any requests for copies of related reports or additional information not contained in this log shall be referred to the designated department media representative, the custodian of records, or if unavailable, to the Watch Commander. Such requests will generally be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Public Records Act (Government Code § 6250, et seq.).

323.4.1 RESTRICTED INFORMATION
It shall be the responsibility of the authorized employee dealing with media requests to ensure that restricted information is not inappropriately released to the media by this department. When in doubt, authorized and available legal counsel should be obtained.

Restricted information includes, but is not limited to the following:

(a) The identity of an elder or abused dependent per 15663 W&I.
(b) Information regarding victims of sex crimes.
(c) Any information that would jeopardize the successful completion of an investigation or related investigation or endanger a person involved in an incident under investigation.
(d) The amount of money taken during a robbery.
(e) Specific information relating to injuries sustained.