



CITY OF MADISON POLICE DEPARTMENT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



News Media Relations

Eff. Date 01/04/2021

Purpose

The Madison Police Department (MPD) actively seeks to establish a cooperative climate in which the news media may obtain information on matters of public concern in a manner which does not hamper police operations or the integrity of the investigation. However, certain information must be withheld from the news media in order to protect Constitutional Rights of an accused, to avoid interfering with an active investigation, or because it is legally privileged.

Procedure

NEWS RELEASES / INCIDENT REPORTS / FACEBOOK / TWITTER / INSTAGRAM / YOUTUBE/BLOG

The MPD makes every effort to release information, without partiality, through website postings, social media, news conferences and other avenues.

1. The on-duty Officer In Charge (OIC) will have the responsibility for the coordination and dissemination of information to the news media relative to significant police operations and/or major incidents during each tour of duty. This would include information about arrests of persons that have a high likelihood of heightened public interest.
2. District Commanders are responsible for reporting information regarding major events and activities that occur within their respective districts which require the use of significant police resources as well as information which addresses crime trends and other issues of public safety. Release of this information should be done through postings on the MPD website, blotters, social media, messages sent to email groups, community meetings and/or other means. These efforts should be coordinated with the Public Information Officer (PIO).
3. Commanders and supervisors of specialized units (e.g., Dane County Narcotics and Gang Task Force, Traffic Enforcement Safety Team, Community Outreach Team, Amigos en Azul, K9 and Mounted Patrols) are responsible for providing pertinent information to media regarding unit activities. The release of this information may be coordinated with the Public Information Officer.
4. The Office of Professional Standards and Internal Affairs will provide summaries to the media at the time of case disposition per the Complaint Acceptance and Investigation Procedure.
5. Shots fired information will be released only if determined to be confirmed as outlined in the Investigation of Incidents Involving Shots Fired Standard Operating Procedure.

ON-CAMERA, TELEPHONE OR IN PERSON INTERVIEWS

We encourage officers to engage in conversations with the media as part of our attempt to be transparent. If the situation is more of a feature story, officers should feel free to talk to the media. When this occurs, the PIO shall be notified of the subject discussed. This notification ideally should be done prior to the interview but can occur after the interview was conducted if time sensitive.

If the media is trying to interview someone related to a more significant/serious incident or investigation, officers should notify the OIC or a scene supervisor so that a PIO or other designated person can provide the necessary interviews with the media.

In serious situations, officers can provide process information or basic information about an incident we have responded to without getting into specifics (i.e., we are investigating a roll-over accident). All on-camera interviews should be coordinated by a scene supervisor or a commanding officer. If the PIO is not called in, an email should be sent to the PIO and the Chief's Office explaining the circumstances around the interview and the topic(s) discussed.

SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the responsibility of all supervisors to contact the OIC if they are assigned to or aware of any incident that has a potential public safety concern. These incidents include, but are not limited to:

- Stranger Sexual Assault
- Robbery
- Weapons Violation
- Home Invasion
- Any other high profile incident that has a significant police presence/response or public safety concern

If there is any doubt whether the incident meets this criteria, please contact the OIC.

PIO RESPONSIBILITIES

When an arrest occurs by the MPD that may result in a heightened public interest, the OIC should contact the PIO by email, unless the situation is urgent. It will be the responsibility of the PIO to write the release of information.

Original SOP: 02/25/2015

(Reviewed Only: 02/04/2016, 12/20/2016, 12/26/2017)

(Revised: 05/02/2018, 08/13/2018, 01/04/2021)