

SHERIFF OF GARFIELD COUNTY

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GARFIELD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE POLICY / PROCEDURE GENERAL

SUBJECT: MEDIA INFORMATION

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 01, 2024

POLICY:

The Garfield County Sheriff's Office will provide accurate and timely public information that it is legally required to release whenever a request is made for that information.

PURPOSE:

It is the purpose of this policy to provide guidelines to personnel of the Garfield County Sheriff's Office for the release and dissemination of public information to the various news media outlets and citizens.

DEFINITIONS:

- **Public Information:** Information that may be of interest to the news media and/or citizens, which is not legally protected, will not compromise an investigation, or infringe upon an individual's rights.
- **Public Information Officer (PIO):** The Sheriff, or Designee assigned as the primary source of information released by the Sheriff's Office, and as such, responds to requests for information by the news media.
- **Designee:** Any member of the Sheriff's Office who has completed a training course in the release of public information.

METHODS:

Daily Press Information: On approximately a daily basis, a daily press release, generated by Offense Report information, will be forwarded to the media through an established list, or to any other media outlet requesting the information. The PIO will usually release this information.

News Release: Whenever a major criminal event occurs, or an incident that has high public awareness occurs (i.e. search and rescue mission, wild land fire, etc.), the shift supervisor shall gather all information of the incident in order for the Sheriff or designated PIO to release the information to all interested media outlets. The summary should include:

- Date, time and location of occurrence
- Type of incident
- Victim's information including any injuries
- Damage or losses incurred
- Arrest information, regardless of Adult or Juvenile status
- Suspect information including physical description and/or vehicle description.

In the event the Sheriff or PIO is unavailable, any member of the Garfield County Sheriff's Office trained in the release of public information may provide the necessary information to the media.

Non-Releasable Information: Certain information should not be released if it pertains to the following:

- Suspect information in an active case
- Specific details of an investigation that only the suspect would know
- Certain Juvenile information
- The identity of victims in death investigations prior to notification of next of kin
- Any other information protected by the Colorado Open Records Act and the Criminal Justice Records Act

Information Pertaining to Jailed Individuals: At times, the news media and citizens will request information concerning individuals who are housed in the Garfield County Jail. The release of this information shall comply with the Public Information Policy of the Detention Center.

Media Activities at Incident Scenes: Members of the Sheriff's Office shall extend every reasonable courtesy to the media at incident scenes, and shall not interfere with the lawful activities of the news media. However, the media shall not be allowed access to areas that are not accessible to the general public including areas where evidence has not been processed, removed and secured.

If approached by the media at a scene, Deputies are encouraged to respond to questions asked by the media, if they have previously completed a training course in the release of public information and feel comfortable releasing the information. If not, or the question is too specific for them to answer, the Deputy shall direct the media to the shift supervisor or the on-scene investigator. **All reasonable efforts will be made to answer questions asked by the media.**