A. Policy

To maintain public confidence, police actions and policy objectives must be disclosed in a full and open manner. The department will disseminate factual accounts of occurrences to the news media, while being cognizant of the public’s right to know and the legal rights of involved individuals. Due consideration will be given to protecting the integrity of the police investigation and the confidentiality of statutorily protected records.

The news media will be kept fully, fairly and accurately informed of all matters within the department’s jurisdiction. This will be done in a timely manner consistent with the needs of law enforcement.

B. Procedure

1. The position of Public Information Officer (PIO) is under the supervision of the Chief of Police. The PIO is a designated spokesperson for police matters.

2. Each incident must be considered in light of its particular circumstances. Generally, the concern is whether the release of information will hamper an investigation, unnecessarily embarrass or jeopardize an innocent person, or promote pretrial prejudice to the extent that a fair trial becomes difficult or impossible. These concerns are weighed against the public’s need and right to be informed.

3. When contacted in person by a member of the news media, a member of this department may ask for proper credentials prior to releasing any information or allowing access to any restricted area. In cases where a newsperson requesting information over the telephone is not known to the department employee receiving the call, and the Public Information Officer is not available to take the call, the employee may, if he/she feels it is necessary, establish the identity of the caller by calling the person at his/her agency.

4. The following are established guidelines for the release of information to the media before an arrest.

   a. A description of the exact offense including a brief summary of events;

   b. Location and time of the offense;

   c. Injuries sustained or damages resulting from the action. Generally, release of a medical condition is prohibited. The receiving hospital releases medical conditions of victim or suspect;

   d. Identity of the victim, except for a sex crime victim, at-risk adult victim or child abuse victim;

   e. Whether or not there are suspects;
f. Information about unidentified suspects such as a physical description or vehicle description;

g. Identification of fugitive suspects for whom a warrant has been issued.

h. Criminal background of a fugitive when the public should be alerted to danger; and,

i. Method of complaint (officer observation, citizen, warrant, indictment).

5. The following established guidelines are for information THAT MAY NOT be released before an arrest:

a. Identity of suspects who are interviewed but not charged;

b. Identity of witnesses where such information could subject them to danger or extreme embarrassment;

c. Identity of sex crime victim, at-risk adult victim, or child abuse victim (general information is sufficient: race, sex, age);

d. Exact address of sex offense or child abuse, where such information could lead to the identity of the victim;

e. Exact identifying information about the weapon or other physical evidence;

f. Any information that could be known only to the guilty party;

g. Information about valuable items not stolen;

h. Conjecture about suspects or fugitives or criminal record of person;

i. Confession, or refusal to make a statement;

j. The amount taken in a robbery or burglary;

k. Identity of victims in death investigations until notification of relatives has been made;

l. Misleading or false information;

m. Forensic tests being performed, results of tests or failure or refusal to submit to such tests; and,

n. School records or school information contained in a report.

6. The following are established guidelines for release of information to the news media after an arrest:
a. Time and place of arrest;

b. Defendant’s name, age, residence, usual occupation, marital status, and similar background;

c. The exact charge;

d. Facts and circumstances relating to the arrest such as resistance, pursuit, possession or use of a weapon, description of contraband discovered;

e. Identity of the agency or unit responsible for the arrest, including the name of the arresting officer (undercover operations may require withholding the officer's identity);

f. The name of the arresting officer unless there are unusual circumstances where it is felt the officer would be jeopardized;

g. Duration of the investigations; Pretrial release or detention arrangements (including amount of bond, location of detention); and,

h. Scheduled dates for various stages in the judicial process;

5. The following established guidelines are for information that MAY NOT be released to the media after an arrest;

   a. Name of defendant’s employer;

   b. Comments about the character or reputation of the defendant;

   c. Names of juvenile defendants, except in the following instances:

       (1) When the juvenile is being charged as an adult.

       (2) When the juvenile is charged with misdemeanor traffic code violations.

       (3) When the juvenile has been charged by the district attorney’s office with a class 1, 2, 3, or 4 felony, or a weapons crime.

   d. Prior criminal record of defendant (Records Section may release Lakewood Police contacts on request of news media in accordance with state-statutes) NCIC and CCIC information is not to be released;

   e. Information about the existence or content of a confession, admission, or statement by the accused;

   f. The refusal of an accused to make a statement;

   g. The refusal of an accused to submit to tests or examinations;

   h. Results of any examination or tests;
i. Description or results of laboratory examination of physical evidence;

j. Reenactment of the crime;

k. Revelation that the defendant directed investigators to the location of a weapon, contraband, or other evidence;

l. Any remarks about the assumed guilt or innocence of the defendant;

m. Comments about the credibility of testimony;

n. If the information for the arrest was derived from an informant;

o. Information or records obtained from DMV; and,

p. School records or school information contained in report.

C. Rule

1. Any employee releasing information listed as “non-release” items is to report the nature of the release to the Public Information Officer as soon as possible.

2. Department personnel should not act to prevent the lawful efforts of the news media to photograph, tape, record and televise adult subjects in a public place, i.e. while seated in a police car, being escorted through the lobby, etc. and/or a sealed crime scene from outside the sealed perimeter. The news media shall not be allowed to photograph subjects in custody within areas of department buildings off limits to the public at large.

3. “Mug Photos” of adult arrestees are available to the news media after an arrest, at the discretion of the lead detective, or a supervisor. Releasing photographs of subjects who are juveniles charged as adults is at the discretion of the prosecuting attorney having jurisdiction over the case.

4. News media persons shall not be allowed access to private property unless granted permission by the property owner, his agent, or other person in charge of the premises.

5. Members of the news media shall not be allowed to accompany police agents onto private property during the execution of an arrest or search warrant.

6. Members of the news media shall not be allowed access to any area wherein there lies the possibility that evidence may be damaged, destroyed, or altered until such time that such evidence has been photographed and processed by the appropriate department personnel, and the evidence has been removed or secured.

7. Members of the news media shall not be allowed access to any area whereby such access would obviously disrupt tactical police plans or operations, or would jeopardize the life of or present the substantial
possibility of injury to any department personnel or citizen other than the member of the news media himself.

a. A member of the news media shall not be prevented from having access to an area solely due to the possibility of injury or death to their selves.

b. If that is the only consideration, he/she shall be advised of the danger then allowed to make the decision to enter on his/her own.

8. Any time a representative of the news media is denied access to certain information as outlined above, he/ she shall be given a courteous explanation of the reasons for such denial.

4121 ON-SCENE NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

A. Policy

The Public Information Officer is on call 24 hours a day/ 7 days a week to the Police Department and the City Manager’s Office.

B. Procedure

1. Notification--The Sector Commander or his designee shall contact the Public Information Officer, by telephone or pager, in the event of the following incidents:

   - Homicide, Attempted Homicide, or deaths which are either suspicious or visible to the public
   - Fatal accidents of any kind
   - Aggravated robbery with injury
   - Burglary with injury
   - S.W.A.T. callouts
   - Found or detonated explosives
   - Serious on-the-job injury or accidents to any City employee; major accidents involving any City vehicle
   - Police-involved shootings of any kind
   - Police high-speed pursuits that result in injury or property damage
   - Children missing under suspicious circumstances, or for a lengthy period of time.
Serious or newsworthy incidents involving City Council members, employees or other high profile individuals

Arrestees incurring serious injuries as a result of police action

Other incidents resulting in mass media interest (multiple media responding)

In addition, it is requested that the Public Information Officer be notified by voice mail of any other incidents of a newsworthy nature, or incidents that would be of interest to city management. Whenever the Public Information Officer is out of town notification by voice mail should be made to the Director of the Office of City Manager and Mayor. Such incidents might include unusual cases, or cases in which exceptional work was conducted by police personnel or citizens.

2. It is the responsibility of the Public Information Officer to govern the activities of members of the news media at the scene of a crime or other event that is under the control of department personnel.

3. The media staging area location will be determined on the basis of safety to the public and preservation of the crime scene. This decision rests with on-scene commander, in consultation with the PIO.

4. When the Public Information Officer is notified, he/she will make the decision to:

   a. Respond to the scene of the event or, when necessary or practical, respond to department headquarters to take charge of disseminating information to the news media.

   b. Make notifications to the various mass media or request communications to assist him/her in making such notifications.

   c. Assume responsibility for completion of the special report and, where applicable, the Media Information Line.

   d. In the absence of the Public Information Officer, the on-scene supervisor will act as Public Information Officer until the PIO arrives. On-scene supervisor is defined as Sector Commander, uniformed supervisor, an Investigation Division supervisor, etc. If the department PIO is unable to respond, then the Director of the Office of City Manager and Mayor shall be contacted for assistance. The Director may have a member of the Neighborhood Action Team respond, or may have the back-up PIO respond. In some circumstances the Director may elect to respond personally.

   e. Members of the Neighborhood Action Team may be called upon to perform the duties of the PIO whenever the PIO is not available.
5. At major scenes, in the absence of the Public Information Officer, news media coordination is conducted by a supervisor or designated agent. When the Sector Commander or supervisor on-scene contacts the Director of the City Manager’s Office a back-up PIO may respond to the scene, depending on the nature of the event. Where necessary, a second agent is assigned to the Communications Section to answer telephone news inquiries and to disseminate updated information. The on-scene news media coordinator provides the Communications Section with timely information about the events on-scene, which may then be relayed to the news media via the Media Information Line.

6. In major case investigations where time and circumstances permit, the release of information to the media is coordinated with the lead investigator assigned to the case or an Investigation Division supervisor.

7. The existence of the position of Public Information Officer does not imply any prohibition on other department members in speaking to members of the news media. Indeed, the very nature of news reporting necessitates the immediate gathering of factual information and often the best source of such information is the patrol agent or investigator. Subject to previous guidelines, department members may respond immediately to media inquiries relating to police matters in which they are personally involved or about which they are informed. If not personally knowledgeable about the subject, the department member shall refer the person seeking such information to one capable of providing it.

a. A supervisor

b. The lead investigator

c. The Public Information Officer

d. All inquiries relating to personnel investigations are referred to the Personnel Services Section.

e. All inquiries relating to cases in which the department is a party to a civil suit are referred to the legal advisor.

f. As a courtesy, a voice mail message should be left for the public information officer or the Director of the Office of City Manager and Mayor when an employee is interviewed by the media.

8. Routine news media inquiries (i.e. "beat checks") will be handled by Communication Center personnel, when called by the media.

9. In the event of an incident or operation generating considerable news media interest (beyond such questions as "what's happening and where"), during normal business hours, the Public Information Officer shall handle such inquiries. Outside of normal business hours and on official City holidays, all news media inquiries shall be referred to the on-duty patrol Sector Commander until it is determined that a Public Information Officer should be called out.
10. When, in the opinion of the Patrol Sector Commander or other sworn supervisor, the volume of news media inquiries makes it impractical for them to be handled by regular Patrol personnel, the Sector Commander or sworn supervisor shall call out the Public Information Officer to handle news media relations. After the Public Information Officer has been fully briefed by the Sector Commander or other sworn supervisor, he/she shall assume responsibility for news media relations and the preparation of a news release or special report.

C. Rule

1. Personnel of the Police Department shall not interfere with the lawful activities of members of the news media at the scene of a crime or other event, except where certain activities are excluded by these procedures.

4122 NEWS SITUATIONS INVOLVING OTHER POLICE AGENCIES OR JURISDICTIONS

B. Procedure

1. Whenever an agency other than Lakewood Police Department (i.e., Denver PD, FBI, West Metro Fire District arson investigator, etc.) initiates an activity within the City of Lakewood, regardless of the degree of LPD assistance, that outside agency is responsible for releasing information about its activity to the news media. Whenever possible a copy of that agency’s press release should be forwarded to Lakewood Police Department Public Information Office.

2. Whenever the Lakewood Police Department initiates an activity in another jurisdiction, the appropriate member of the Lakewood Police Department is, after advising any other involved agency, responsible for releasing information about that activity to the news media. If requested, a copy of Lakewood Police Department press release can be forwarded to the other agency for reference on what was released to the media.

3. In any situation wherein multiple jurisdictions or agencies are present (such as police and fire), responsible persons representing such agencies are consulted as to a plan for governing the activities of members of the news media. Members of the media are referred accordingly.

4. In death investigations within Lakewood involving the offices of the coroner and district attorney, the primary responsibility for the release of information to the news media lies with this department, subject to prior notification of relatives by the coroner.