PURPOSE/POLICY:
The purpose of this directive is to establish formal guidelines for release and dissemination of public information to the print, broadcast news media, and social media.

It is the policy of the Cedar Rapids Police Department (CRPD) to cooperate fully and impartially with authorized news media representatives in their efforts to gather factual, public information pertaining to activities of the CRPD, as long as these activities do not unduly interfere with departmental operation, infringe upon individual rights, or violate the law.

DEFINITIONS:
Public Information:
Information specifically identified in the Iowa Code(s) that may be of interest to the general public regarding policy, procedures, or events involving the CRPD. It can also be other newsworthy information that is not legally protected, does not unduly interfere with the mission of the department, infringe upon the rights of a defendant or compromise the legitimate safety and privacy interests of all parties involved.

News Media:
Individuals who are directly employed by accredited news media agencies of the electronic or print media such as radio, television and newspapers. Freelance writers in this field are to be regarded as other members of the general public, unless otherwise designated by the Chief of Police, the Public Information Officer, or a Division Commander.

Public Safety Communications Coordinator:
The CRPD’s Public Safety Communications Coordinator (PSCC), formerly the Public Information Officer (PIO), serves as a central source of information for release by the CRPD and responds to requests for information by the news media and the community. The PSCC is the department’s primary individual responsible for all matters relating to public affairs, public relations, or requests for information.

Assistant Public Information Officer (APIO):
An (APIO) will be assigned as needed. APIO’s will be in the Administrative, Investigative, or Patrol Division depending on the request.

PROCEDURES:
Duties of the Public Information Officer:
- Provide assistance to CRPD members on matters that will involve the news media as required.
- Assist news personnel in covering routine news stories, and at the scenes of incidents. [54.1.1 a]
- Assist the news media on an on-call basis.
Cultivate and nurture contacts with media organizations.

The PSCC or the APIO must be available 24 hours a day to assist in breaking news events and other media inquiries.

- Prepare and distribute media releases after receiving authorization and coordination of the release of information from the Chief, Deputy Chief, Criminal Investigation Division (CID), and/or watch or traffic commanders concerning: [46.1.10a; 54.1.1 d, e]
  - Information about victims, witnesses, and suspects
  - Confidential agency investigations and operations
  - Information involving mutual efforts with other public safety agencies
    - To coordinate release of information with other agencies PIOs/PSCCs or media representatives

- Arrange and assist at media conferences. [54.1.1 c]
- Coordinate and assist with media relations during significant situations, events, and disasters. [46.1.10a]
- Promote public awareness so that the community understands, accepts, and supports the goals and programs of the CRPD.
- Make personal appearances before the public to present information on behalf of the CRPD.
- Screen requests from the media for the Chief of Police and other members of the administration. Coordinate interviews with media for the Chief and administration and assist in preparing departmental representatives for these interviews.
- Develop a news release distribution plan utilizing the CRPD’s email to insure the media is informed of significant information at the same time. Ensure the list of the media is current so that all authorized media are included.

Duties of the Assistant Public Information Officer(s):

- Provide assistance to the PSCC and CRPD members on matters that will involve the news media as required.
- In the absence of the PSCC, assist news personnel in covering both routine news stories and news stories at the scenes of incidents.
- Assist the news media on an on-call basis. The PSCC or the APIO must be available 24 hours a day to assist in breaking news events and other media inquiries as required.
- Prepare and distribute media releases as needed or required. [54.1.1 b]
- Coordinate and assist with media relations during significant situations, events, and disasters.
- Promote public awareness so that the community understands, accepts, and supports the goals and programs of the CRPD.
Duties of the Watch Commander:

- Assist news personnel in covering routine news stories and at the scenes of incidents during their tour of duty.
- Prepare and distribute media releases as required.
  - Typically, after normal business hours, and on weekends watch commanders will coordinate and prepare media releases.
- Coordinate and assist the PSCC with media relations during significant situations, events, and disasters.
- Provide electronic or hard copies of all news releases made during their tour of duty to the PSCC and command staff.

Notification of PSCC/APIO:
The PSCC will be notified as soon as practical in the following circumstances - regardless of the day of week or the time:

- All homicides
- All Amber alerts
- Hostage situations
- Any shooting involving any CRPD personnel
- Fatality accidents
- Injury accidents involving CRPD personnel
- Any major incident that will garner news media attention

The PSCC/APIO can be contacted at any time the commanding officer requests. However, the PSCC/APIO may not respond to all requests, but may rather coordinate proper media action to be taken on any given incident.

Absence of PSCC:
If the PSCC is not available, the following are authorized to act in the PSCC’s absence:

- APIO
- Watch Commander or designee
- CID Commander or designee
Cooperation with the Media:

- The news media has no greater access or right to information than the general public. For the purposes of this section, the media and general public is restricted from gaining access to crime or incident scenes where evidence may be altered or destroyed. [54.1.3]
- Authorized news media representatives shall have reasonable access to the PSCC, the Chief of Police, or anyone designated by the Chief, and operations of the CRPD as governed by this policy. When information is denied to a media representative, the reason for that denial will be fully and courteously explained.
- The CRPD recognizes identification from all local, national, and international news organizations. The PSCC, APIO, Field Supervisor, senior officer at the scene, or the Watch Commander will determine questions concerning access, including individuals who identify themselves as media but do not have proper credentials on their person. [54.1.3]
- Public information, as specified by the Code of Iowa Chapter 22, shall be released to the media as promptly as circumstances allow. This information should be provided as objectively as possible.
- Public information may be provided to the media representatives by telephone if requested. Only public information should be released.
- Senior officers at crime or incident scenes may release information of a factual nature not in violation of the Code of Iowa and CRPD policy, or should refer this request to their supervisor, Watch Commander, or the PSCC. If an officer is unsure whether information should be released, the officer should refer the requester to their supervisor, or the Watch Commander.
- The Chief’s Office, PSCC, APIO, Division Commanders, or their representatives will issue written media statements and releases. Watch Commanders, Investigative Commanders, and other supervisors may issue press releases as authorized by this directive. A copy of all media releases issued will be sent via e-mail to the Command Distribution List.
- The Joint Communications Agency (JCA), as well as any department personnel, shall notify the Watch Commander as soon as possible upon receiving information about events or activities that may have media interest.
- The Watch Commander shall be responsible for ensuring the PSCC, APIO, Divisional Commander, or the Chief of Police is informed of events that may have media interest.
- No preferential treatment will be shown to any representative of the news media. It is the intent of this policy to provide information to the media without unreasonable delay.
- No statements regarding policy of the City of Cedar Rapids or departments therein will be made except through the office of the Chief of Police.
- All courtesies will be shown to news media in the field, as well as within the facilities of the CRPD. An officer, in turn, should expect the courtesy to be returned. If an officer feels that they have been unfairly treated by members of the media, a complaint should be forwarded to the PSCC or the Chief of Police.
Information that may be released in connection with an investigation of an event or crime includes:

- The type or nature of an event or crime.
- The location, date and time, immediate facts and circumstances, and general description of events.
- Type and quantity of property taken (amount of money taken in a robbery will not be released).
- The identity and address of a victim, with the exception of a child victim of sexual abuse, and in other cases where the release could put the victim in jeopardy. A Division Commander, the PSCC, or the Chief of Police will be the only person authorized to release this information.
- Requests for aid in locating evidence, a complainant, or a suspect.
- Numbers of officers or people involved in an event or investigation, and the length of the investigation.
- Name of the officer in charge of a case, their supervisor, division, and assignment (unless the officer is in an undercover capacity).

Information that may not be released in connection with an investigation of an event or crime unless authorized by the Division Commander, PSCC, APIO, or Chief of Police includes:

- Any information that the Code of Iowa specifies as confidential.
- The identity of the suspect prior to arrest unless such information will aid in the apprehension of the suspect, or serve to warn the public of potential danger.
- The identity of any child victim of a sexual abuse or any related information, which, if divulged, could lead to the child’s identity.
- The identity of victims if such disclosure would prejudice an investigation or place the victim in potential danger. Witnesses, as part of the investigative report, will not be released.
- The identity of any juvenile offender under the age of 10.
- The identity of any critically injured or deceased person prior to notification of next of kin.
- The results of any investigative procedure such as lineups, polygraph tests, fingerprint comparison, ballistics test, or other procedures (the fact these tests have been performed may be revealed without further comment).
- Information which, if prematurely released, may interfere with the investigation or apprehension such as the nature of leads, specifics of a Criminal Report, details of the crime known only to the perpetrator and the police, or information that may cause the suspect to flee or more effectively avoid apprehension. For most routine investigations, only the information of the Incident Report should be released.
- Information that may be of evidentiary value in criminal proceedings.
• Specific cause of death unless officially determined by the medical examiner.
• The home address, home telephone number, or personal cell phone number of any member of the CRPD.
• Any information regarding a personnel matter within the CRPD.
• Specific medical information regarding patient’s injuries or treatments provided.
• Since the CRPD does not determine cause of death, any information regarding a suspected suicide will not be released except to say that the call was a medical or medical in nature.

Arrest Information: [54.1.1]
Following arrest, issuance of an arrest warrant, or filing of information or indictment, it is permissible to release:
• The accused’s name, date of birth, and address of record.
• The time and place of arrest, the charges filed in that arrest.
• The identity of the arresting officers and the duration of the investigation, unless the officers are engaged in undercover operations.
• Release of the name(s) of those arrested should include the following disclaimer:
  ❖ Disclaimer: Any arrest information included above is based on the legal conclusion that, as with any criminal case, a charge is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

Following arrest and formal charging of a suspect, but prior to adjudication, the following types of information will not be released without permission of the Chief of Police, Division Commander, or their designee:
• Prior criminal conviction record from outside agency, character, or reputation of a defendant.
• Existence or contents of any confession, admission or statement of a defendant, or their failure or unwillingness to make a statement.
• Performance or results of any tests, or a defendant’s refusal or failure to submit to tests such as a polygraph.
• Identity, statement, or expected testimony of any witness.
• Statement or expected testimony of any victim.
• Any opinion or knowledge about the guilt or innocence of a defendant, or the merits of the case.
• Any opinion or knowledge of the potential for a plea bargain or other pretrial action.
• In almost all cases, requests for information concerning post arrest information should be referred to the Linn County Attorney.
Special Considerations—Criminal Matters:

- CRPD personnel shall extend reasonable courtesy to news media representatives and the public, at crime scenes. This would include access of personnel and equipment, considering it does not interfere with the police mission or the movement of traffic. [54.1.3]

- The news media or public shall not be allowed access to any area or scene of an incident or crime where there is a possibility that evidence may be damaged, altered, destroyed, or otherwise prejudiced by its existence being published or portrayed. Once evidence has been processed, removed, and secured, the media may be allowed to enter by permission of the commanding officer or evidence technician in charge of the scene.

- On private property, photography, film, or videotape recording requires the permission of the owner or the owner’s representative.

- Suspects or accused persons in custody shall not be posed or arrangements made for photographs, telecasts, or interviews, nor shall CRPD personnel pose with suspects or accused persons in custody. Photographing by the news media of any individual who is in custody of the CRPD will not be authorized within the confines of the police building. When escorting a prisoner outside the building, photographing by the news media will not be restricted. Federal prisoners in custody of the CRPD may not be photographed, unless authorized by the arresting federal agency or the U. S. Marshal.

- When an individual is charged with a criminal offense and is sought by law enforcement authorities, photographs or mug shots may be released to the media to help locate the individual. No departmental photographs, mug shots, videotape, film, or composites of subjects in custody shall otherwise be released to the media unless authorized by the PSCC, the Division Commander, or the Chief of Police.

- At the scene of major crimes, such as hostage and barricade situations, the officer in charge shall designate a preliminary press area as early as possible and as close to the scene as safety and operational requirements allow.

- The fact that a suicide or suspected suicide has occurred will not be released by the CRPD. The name, age, address, and sex of the victim may be released following notification of next of kin. The medical examiner will be the only individual to determine the cause of, or release circumstances of, a suicide following their ruling of cause of death.
Special Considerations—Non-criminal Matters

- At the scene of significant accidents, man-made or natural catastrophes, the principles of media cooperation shall be maintained to the degree that they do not interfere with the mission of the police, fire, medical, or other emergency personnel.
- Media access to and movement within fire lines shall be controlled by the fire officer in charge. In consultation with the fire officer in charge, the ranking police officer in charge at the scene shall establish an observation point from which the media may observe and photograph the incident.
  - At the discretion of the officer in charge, an inner perimeter may be established for the media from which to record the event.
- Sensitive information relating to internal investigations of police employees will not be released. Referrals for this information should be referred to the Chief of Police.
- Daily dispatch logs, arrest reports, and other administrative reports on calls for service will be made available to the media via email/website. Daily dispatch log reports will be available to the media as well as the public at the front desk.
- Media representatives shall be denied access to the contents of investigative or incident reports and records where release of the information would:
  - Interfere with law enforcement proceedings, including pending investigations.
  - Deprive a person of the right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication, or give one (1) party to a controversy an undue advantage by exclusive access to such information.
  - Constitute an unwarranted invasion of the personal privacy rights of another person.
  - Reveal the identity of an individual who has furnished information to the CRPD under confidential circumstances.
  - Disclose investigative techniques and procedures, thereby impairing the effectiveness of CRPD investigations.
  - Endanger the life or physical safety of any person.
  - If there is any doubt of whether to release information or not, do not release the information and refer the requester to the PSCC, APIO, divisional commander, or the Chief of Police. Iowa law safeguards investigative information from public information and following the Code and this guidance will allow pertinent information to the media and public, as well as safeguard our investigations and protect the rights of individuals.
Public Releases Involving Multiple Agencies [54.1.1f]

During an event where multiple agencies are involved and a media release is needed, a joint release is preferred rather than each agency releasing their own information. This process is more efficient, effective, and aids in eliminating confusion and the differing of accounts.

The following procedures shall be utilized by the Cedar Rapids Police Department and its PSCC for releasing information when other agencies have been involved in a mutual effort:

- The PSCC or a commander shall make contact with the PIO or other official from the other involved agencies to coordinate a joint release of information.
  - A designation as which department’s PIO or commander will be handling the release shall be established and agreed upon by all involved agencies.

- In situations where the CRPD’s PSCC or commander is not handling the release, the PSCC or commander shall act as the liaison with the other agencies. They shall ensure the commander of the division involved in the incident and the Chief of Police are notified of the content and the expected date and time of any joint release as well as approval from the Chief of Police to include the CRPD.

- In cases where the CRPD’s PSCC or a commander is tasked with providing the joint release to the media, the internal approval process utilized for media releases shall be employed. In addition, the PSCC or commander shall receive approval from all other agencies involved prior to the release.

- Media releases from multi-jurisdictional task force operations shall be handled by task force commander personnel or designees. The CRPD’s commander of personnel assigned to the task force shall notify the Division Commander and the Chief of Police when the media release directly involves a CRPD officer or the event occurred with the city of Cedar Rapids.

- Nothing in this policy shall preclude the department from issuing its own media release.