

# UW Whitewater Police



## Media Relations/ Public Information

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## I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines to identify who may release information, to establish procedures for the proper dissemination of that information from the police department to media representatives, to describe procedures for controlling media access at locations where such access would interfere with law enforcement operations, and to describe the procedure for notifying the Chief of Police or designee of incidents where there may be a question as to the agency's liability or those which may result in heightened community interest.

## II. Policy

It is the policy of the UW-Whitewater Police Department (UWWPD) to comply fully with established University policies regarding the dissemination of information on any police related situation which could reasonably be expected to impact upon the public image of the University. Furthermore, information, which is legally privileged, would violate the constitutional rights of any person, or is otherwise specifically prohibited in this, or, any other University or Departmental directive shall not be provided to the media by members of this Department.

## III. Procedure

A. **Dissemination of Information:** UWW Police Department shall not disseminate information to the media without prior approval of the Chief/Director of the Police Department or their designee.

B. **Public Information Responsibility:**

1. The overall public information function for UW-Whitewater is the responsibility of the office of University Marketing and Communications. This responsibility includes handling potential situations, as well as generating media interest. Their designated representative serves as the primary spokesperson for UWW Police Department in the event of non-routine, major or politically sensitive incident on campus.
2. The Director of University Marketing and Communications, or designee, is primary contact person for all police related incidents.

C. **UWWPD Notification Procedures (11.3.3)**

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1. Supervisors are to be notified as soon as possible regarding the below list of incidents. Supervisors have the primary responsibility to then notify the Chief/Director or designee.
  2. The Chief/Director or designee shall then notify University Marketing and Communications of the incident as soon as possible. These incidents include:
    - a. Suspected or reported excessive use of force;
    - b. Any use of force resulting in serious bodily injury;
    - c. Vehicle pursuit resulting in serious motor vehicle accident or injury;
    - d. Arrests involving unusual circumstances or "high-profile" individuals;
    - e. Possible civil rights violations;
    - f. Violation of criminal law by departmental personnel;
    - g. Any incident involving departmental personnel that results in significant property damage;
    - h. Any incident involving a departmental employee's failure to act resulting in a serious injury or significant loss of property;
    - i. Domestic situations involving departmental personnel;
    - j. A death or serious injury which occurs on campus;
    - k. A major accident involving substantial property loss or damage;
    - l. A major chemical or radiation incident which poses a serious threat to public safety;
    - m. Any serious threat of violence directed against any person or parcel directly associated with the university community, example, bomb threats when a device is found, death threats, etc.;
    - n. Any other occasion in which the media became involved, or make inquiry into an incident;
    - o. University Marketing and Communications will also be notified should any of the above incidents occur in the immediate vicinity of campus provided the UWW Police are made aware of such incident(s).
  3. Employees contacted directly by the media shall notify the on-duty/on-call supervisor of any interview requests. All conversations with members of the news media should be considered "on the record" and are subject to being quoted.
  4. The Chief, Assistant Chief or Supervisor trained as PIO shall respond to media inquiries about the police case, police procedures and other matters dealing specifically with the UW-Whitewater Police Department, except pending litigation, in consultation with UMC. UMC will respond to media when inquiries involve university matters such as student Code of Conduct issues, staff discipline issues and other matters involving university policies and procedures.
- D. Release of Information:** The following persons are authorized to communicate with the external media at the scene of an incident, from agency files, concerning an ongoing criminal investigation and/ or at any time that a University Marketing and Communications spokesperson is not available:
1. The UWWPD Chief of Police, or designee.

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2. UWWPD Assistant Chief of Police or UWWPD Police Lieutenant.
3. Any other involved UWWPD employee, with the approval of the Chief of Police or their designee.

**E. Release of Information Involving Another Agency:**

1. When an incident involving UWWPD personnel also involves another agency, our releasing authority will coordinate the release of any information with that agency.
2. The agency having the primary jurisdiction shall be responsible for releasing, or coordinating the release of information.

**F. What May Not be Released:** The following information **WILL NOT BE RELEASED** to the news media in criminal matters due to sixth (6) amendment, statutory, or other restrictions:

1. Information which may jeopardize the successful conclusion of an investigation.
2. Statements related to the character, reputation, or prior criminal record of an arrestee or a prospective witness, or any opinion as to the guilt or innocence of an accused.
3. The existence or contents of any admissions, confessions, pleas or statements attributable to an accused person, or failure to make a statement.
4. The performance or results of any examinations or tests, or the refusal of the accused to take any examination or tests or participate in a lineup.
5. Opinions concerning evidence or argument about its use at trial or any disposition of pleas, evidence, arguments, statements, etc.
6. The name, address, or current location of any victims of sex crimes, or of any witnesses of crimes.
7. The identity of any suspect for whom a warrant or summons has not been issued.
8. Names, addresses, or other information which would lead to the specific identity of juvenile offenders under the age of 17.
9. The names of deceased or injured persons prior to notification of their next of kin.
10. Information received from other law enforcement agencies without their concurrence in releasing that information.

**G. What May be Released:** The following information regarding criminal matters **MAY BE RELEASED** upon media request and according to the terms of this policy:

1. The type of event or crime and when and where it occurred to include a brief synopsis of known facts concerning the incident.
2. The arrestee's name (if over 17 years old), age, sex, resident and charges.
3. The identity of crime victims, complainants or witnesses except as specified in this policy.
  - a. When a victim requests that their name not be used this information will be conveyed to the media along with the obligation to respect that request.
  - b. Only the age, sex, and general location of sex crime victims or juveniles may be released. Anonymity must not be jeopardized.
4. Any information contained in a public record (e.g. executed search or arrest warrants, etc.).
5. The type and extent of an investigation.

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6. Information concerning property loss, physical injuries or death (after notification of next of kin).
  7. Identities of investigating agencies, or suspects if public assistance is needed for locating a suspect.
- H. **Control of Media Access (54.1.3):** Criteria for controlling media access to UWSPD activities are as follows:
1. All members of the UWSPD shall extend every courtesy to accredited news media representatives who are actively covering an event occurring at the University. These courtesies shall include permission of closer access to the scene than that which may be granted to the general public. However, location of media staff, equipment or vehicles shall not be permitted to interfere with police or university operations.
  2. At critical incident scenes, the Incident Commander or PIO will establish a media briefing area as close to the scene as safety and operational requirements allow. Depending on the scale of the incident, the responsibility to establish a media briefing area may fall under Media Relations Operations.
  3. Media representatives should be assisted in gaining needed access to an event as soon as such access will not interfere with law enforcement mission, investigation or public safety. However, they may not trespass on privately owned property without authorization of the owner or guardian.
  4. Members of the UWSPD will take no action either to discourage or encourage the media in photographing, televising, or otherwise documenting anything within their view at a crime scene, accident, police operation or other university functions where accredited news media personnel are duly authorized to be present. This shall include, but not be limited to:
    - a. A suspect being taken into custody or transported.
    - b. A victim or evidence. However, evidence, witnesses or victims can be removed and other precautions taken to preserve the scene or to protect the integrity of the investigation prior to admitting news media to the scene.
  5. Media representatives shall not be permitted to interview a person in custody. Following incarceration, any such arrangements are the responsibility of the sheriff in whose jail the person is incarcerated.
  6. No member shall knowingly and unnecessarily obstruct news media representatives in the performance of their duties; however, media representatives are neither implicitly nor expressly exempt from any state or federal statute, city ordinance, or university rule or regulation.
  7. Restrictions on news media representatives should be based only on official police responsibilities and on principles contained in this policy, not on any individual UWSPD member's view of what constitutes an acceptable standard of journalism or news photography.

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8. Press releases of departmental activities shall be jointly prepared and coordinated between University Marketing and Communications personnel and the Chief/Director of Police or their designee according to the principles and procedures contained in this policy. Press releases may be prepared in support of departmental activities, to request needed media support, or in response to major newsworthy events, and shall be made available to all area media representatives indicating an interest in such information.
9. If a UWWPD member at an event has reason to question the status or actions of any person who claims to be a news media representative, the UWWPD member is authorized to seek appropriate media identification from that person. If no appropriate media identification is presented, the UWWPD member should not grant media privileges to that individual.
10. Any UWWPD or University member having a complaint, regarding the conduct of any news media representative should forward such complaint in writing to the Chief/Director of Police and to University Marketing and Communications.
11. Media access may be denied or revoked by any UWWPD Supervisor for just cause, which will include, but not be limited to, repeated violations of, or due to the provisions of this policy.
  - a. Any unacceptable conduct by a media representative resulting in such revocation of denial of access shall be provided to the Chief/Director, by the Supervisor making such denial or revocation, in writing.
  - b. Documentation of such revocation and/ or misconduct shall be conveyed to University Marketing and Communications for appropriate resolution with the employing media agency.
- I. **Freedom of Information:** In accordance to the Freedom of Information Act, UWWPD is obligated to release certain information to the public upon request. Information requests by the public will be directed to the Chief/Director of Police or their designee. When a request is made, the following actions protocol will take place:
  1. The Chief/Director of Police or their designee will review the request and normally within five (5) to seven (7) working days respond to the request with one (1) of the following:
    - a. The requested records will be provided to the requestor.
    - b. The requested records will be entirely withheld because the release is prohibited by law.
    - c. The requested records will be provided in part and withheld in part.
    - d. It is not practically possible to provide the requested records or to determine whether they are available within five (5) work day period.
  2. The Chief/Director of Police or their designee may make reasonable charges for its costs incurred in accessing, duplicating, supplying, or searching for requested records.
    - a. In cases where the cost for producing the requested records are likely to exceed \$25.00, a request may be made before continuing the process by

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the agency to the requestor, to require a deposit not to exceed the amount of the advanced determination.

- b. The deposit shall be credited toward the final cost.