

PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT MANUAL OF GENERAL ORDERS			
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PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE: NEWS MEDIA			

All members must be aware that the news media is essentially carrying out its role under the constitutional guarantee of a free press. This role is interpreted by the news media itself as meaning the fullest disclosure of the facts, consistent with the usual rules of good judgment and the constitutional provision that every citizen is entitled to a fair and impartial trial.

In their respective roles as public servants, the police and the news media must establish a clear working relationship so that each may do their job effectively. Constructive police-news media relations are important to effective police service and every effort must be extended to maintain them. To ensure this relationship, the Police Department has established this policy of working with the news media.

A. Member Responsibility

1. When dealing with the news media, the individual officer's good judgment must prevail, remembering their primary responsibility is to carry out the police task.
2. Members will refer the news media to the Public Information Office (PIO) for any request for an official statement and refrain from commenting on any criminal investigation.
3. Members at the scene shall take no action to discourage the news media from photographing or televising persons or scenes. However, members at the scene shall give no assistance to them in such efforts and shall not direct or encourage victims, witnesses, or prisoners to be photographed or interviewed by the news media.
4. Members may offer a designated staging area for the news media to record police activity that does not interfere with police operations or affect the general flow of traffic.
5. Members will make every effort to cooperate with the news media; however, sound judgment must be exercised.
6. Any complaint against a Police Department member, by a member of the news media, will be handled as outlined in General Order 10.04.
7. When a Police Department member lodges a complaint against a member of the news media, the PIO will receive and record such complaint and conduct an appropriate investigation. When the complaint is found to be valid, the PIO supervisor will submit a written report to the Chief of Police.

8. News media representatives will not have access to the Department's lock-up facility. The lock-up is used as a temporary holding area for prisoners until they can be transferred to another detention facility.
9. News media representatives shall not be permitted to interview a person in custody, though such person may, through request to detention personnel, ask for an interview with the media following booking and incarceration in the Detention Center.
10. If a member of the news media is arrested or detained at the scene of an incident, the Police Department member or their supervisor shall, as soon as reasonably possible, notify the PIO supervisor, or the full-time PIO in their absence.

B. News Media at Scenes

1. Authorized representatives of any news media may enter any area closed because of a menace to public health or safety after informing police of their media affiliation/credentials and after being advised of the dangers present, provided such entry does not, in any way, hinder police or other public safety operations.
2. Prior to entering the area, news media representatives will be informed that the decision to assume the risk of possible danger remains with them, and that it is not the responsibility of Police Department members to provide for the safety of media representatives who voluntarily choose to subject themselves to possible dangers.
3. News media representatives may also be permitted access to the perimeter of crime scenes, but not within the crime scene itself. A crime scene is defined as an area secured by the police in order to preserve and process evidence of a criminal act. Access may be permitted after all evidence has been processed and collected.
4. Members have no standing to invite the media into private premises or private property without the consent of the owner or person in charge of the premises/property.

C. News Media Identification

1. Members of the press and the general public have the same rights in any area in the public domain. No individual is required to have or display "press credentials" in order to exercise their right to observe, photograph or record police activity in an area accessible to, or within view of, the general public.
2. To assure that the Police Department is communicating with an authorized news media representative at the scene of an incident, and to assure the representative that they will not be unnecessarily obstructed in the pursuit of their functions, the Department *may request* to view their news media identification cards or credentials.
3. In the event a Police Department member questions the validity of any media credentials presented, the member or their supervisor should restrict access to any closed area and immediately notify the on-call PIO or PIO supervisor for validation of the credentials. The

media representative can be given the department cell number of the on-call PIO member or PIO supervisor for any additional communication. The on-call PIO member or PIO supervisor will notify the member or their supervisor once the credentials have or have not been confirmed.