

South Carolina Department of Public Safety



Office of the Director

10311 Wilson Blvd. Blythewood, SC 29016 Post Office Box 1993 Blythewood SC 29016

POLICY	200.31
EFFECTIVE DATE	MARCH 22, 2016
SUBJECT	MEDIA RELATIONS
REPLACES POLICY DATED	MAY 22, 2012
APPLICABLE LEGAL AUTHORITIES	S. C. Code §§ 30-4-10, et seq., Driver Privacy Protection Act of 1994 Family Privacy Protection Act of 2002
APPLICABLE STANDARDS	54.1.1 and 54.1.2
APPLICABLE STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES (SOP)	N/A
FORMS	N/A
DISTRIBUTION	TO ALL EMPLOYEES

THE LANGUAGE USED IN THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE AN EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE EMPLOYEE AND THE AGENCY. THIS DOCUMENT DOES NOT CREATE ANY CONTRACTUAL RIGHTS OR ENTITLEMENTS. THE AGENCY RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REVISE THE CONTENT OF THIS DOCUMENT, IN WHOLE OR IN PART. NO PROMISES OR ASSURANCES, WHETHER WRITTEN OR ORAL, WHICH ARE CONTRARY TO OR INCONSISTENT WITH THE TERMS OF THIS PARAGRAPH CREATE ANY CONTRACT OF EMPLOYMENT.

I. PURPOSE

To facilitate the flow of information between the South Carolina Department of Public Safety (*SCDPS*), the media, and the general public.

II. POLICY

This policy will assure that the release of information meets the needs of the general public and news media without infringing on an individual's right to privacy or interfering with the process of conducting a fair and impartial trial.

III. DEFINITIONS:

For the purposes of this policy, the following definition(s) will apply:

Community Relations Officer (CRO) - Public information officer for a division within SCDPS responsible for the release of information to the general public and/or media.

Division Director - The Chief Financial Officer; Bureau of Protective Services Chief; Human Resources Director; Office of Professional Responsibility Chief; Office of Strategic Services, Accreditation, Policy and Inspections Commander; General Counsel; Communications Director; Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs Director; Office of Information Technology Director; Legislative Liaison; Immigration Enforcement Unit Commander; Colonel for Highway Patrol and Colonel for State Transport Police.

IV. CRO AND SCDPS COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR RESPONSIBILITIES

A. The South Carolina Highway Patrol (HP), the State Transport Police (STP), the Bureau of Protective Services (BPS), the Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs (OHSJP), and the Law Enforcement Officers Hall of Fame will each have a point(s) of contact for the media who will be listed prominently on the SCDPS website (www.scdps.gov). This information will be distributed to the media once a year.

- B. When the CRO is not available, information requests from outside parties should be routed to the SCDPS Communications Director.
- C. The SCDPS Communications Director serves as the primary agency spokesperson and is responsible for general media requests regarding:
 - 1. the Department of Public Safety;
 - 2. coordination of requests to interview the SCDPS director or other agency personnel;
 - 3. information concerning any of the director's initiatives and department procedures;
 - 4. information pertaining to the Human Resources Office; the Office of Financial Services; the Office of Professional Responsibility; Immigration Enforcement Unit; the Office of General Counsel; and the Office of Strategic Services, Accreditation, Policy, and Inspections;
 - 5. information relating to any employee involving confidential internal investigations and its operations, criminal charges, disciplinary actions, or terminations; and [54.1.1(e)]
 - 6. SCDPS policy. If there are any changes to this policy affecting the news media, a reasonable effort will be made to inform media representatives of such changes and to solicit their input before final publication. [54.1.2]
- D. **SCDPS Communications Director Media Responsibilities:**
 - 1. Ensure the availability of a spokesperson to the media for each division. HP, STP, and BPS will have a spokesperson available at all times. [54.1.1 (a)]
 - 2. Assist news personnel in covering routine news stories, to include collision scene access, if warranted. [54.1.1(a)]
 - 3. Prepare and distribute news releases, public service announcements, web site information, commercials, and other information relating to SCDPS activities. [54.1.1 (b)]
 - 4. Coordinate and authorize the release of information concerning victims, witnesses, and suspects in accordance with Policy 500.06 (Release of Information) and applicable law. [54.1.1 (d)]
 - 5. Work with other agencies and news media outlets during times of crisis or disaster situations.
 - 6. Serve as a liaison between the general public, the news media, the SCDPS director, and other SCDPS personnel authorizing, scheduling, and coordinating news conferences, media events, and interviews. [54.1.1 (c)]
 - 7. Plan promotional, advertising, and educational programs designed to enhance public and media awareness about SCDPS and its various roles. This will include providing speakers on a variety of topics aimed at specific audiences.
 - 8. Publish and disseminate internal agency newsletters and brochures.
 - 9. Assist local law enforcement agencies, at their request, with their communications efforts. [54.1.1 (f)]
 - 10. Work with other agencies to coordinate publicity on joint activities. [54.1.1 (f)]
 - 11. Release requested public information in a timely manner.

12. Oversee the SCDPS web site and make information available through the SCDPS web site for the public and media, including cost of reports, SCDPS history, relevant names and addresses, and information regarding Policy 300.38 (Ride-Along Program).
13. Issue news releases and accompanying photographs involving SCDPS matters and its law enforcement officers as warranted via email transmissions and/or website updates.
14. Issue news releases summarizing the fatalities which occurred during a holiday period or weekend period.
15. Coordinate all requests for tours of SCDPS property or to photograph/film SCDPS property or facilities.
16. Oversee the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) office and ensure compliance with FOIA and relevant privacy laws.
17. Manage SCDPS social media accounts and ensure content is consistent with agency social media policy (200.38) and standards.

V. SCDPS HEADQUARTERS COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE LIAISON

- A. There will be a law enforcement liaison assigned to SCDPS Headquarters who will work closely with the Communications Director in all facets of dealing with the media and will serve as a spokesperson regarding SCDPS matters, including personnel and other issues typically handled by the Communications Director. The liaison will work with the Communications Director daily to assist in agency public information matters and will serve as a back-up when the Communications Director is unavailable.
- B. The HP Community Relations Office supervisors will fall under the supervision of the Communications Liaison, who will oversee the HP CROs and coordinate the delivery of information to the media in each of the seven regional Troop areas.

VI. HP CRO

- A. HP will have one CRO assigned to each of its seven troops who will address routine traffic and safety matters, enforcement initiatives, criminal arrests, and traffic safety campaigns.
- B. A CRO will be on call for each area (troop) of the state at all times. The media may access the appropriate on-call CRO for their area of the state by calling the SCDPS Media Line.
- C. The CROs ensure all news outlets/reporters in their area are familiar with the procedure for accessing information from the SCDPS Media Line and contacting the on-call CRO.
- D. All inquiries regarding SCDPS policy matters and disciplinary or criminal issues involving any HP employee must be referred to the SCDPS Communications Director.
- E. HP CROs' contact information will be listed on the SCDPS website.

VII. STP CRO

- A. The STP CRO will address issues in all geographic areas of the state regarding commercial motor vehicles (CMV) and CMV safety, state and federal laws governing commercial motor vehicles, and inquiries regarding STP Size and Weight Enforcement Programs.
- B. All inquiries regarding SCDPS policy matters and disciplinary or criminal issues involving any STP employee must be referred to the SCDPS Communications Director.
- C. The STP CRO's contact information will be listed on the SCDPS website.

VIII. BPS CRO

- A. The BPS spokesperson, in conjunction with the Communications Director, will coordinate information regarding safety and security on the Statehouse grounds, Governor's Mansion, the Supreme Court/Court of Appeals, and certain state office facilities.
- B. The Bureau of Protective Services CRO's contact information will be listed on the SCDPS website.
- C. All inquiries regarding SCDPS policy matters and disciplinary or criminal issues involving any BPS employee must be referred to the SCDPS Communications Director.
- D. BPS CRO's contact information will be listed on the SCDPS website.

IX. OHSJP SPOKESPERSON

- A. OHSJP will have a central spokesperson to coordinate media inquiries regarding traffic safety initiatives, federal and state grant programs, and South Carolina highway safety statistics.
- B. The OHSJP director and the Communications Office will determine a designee to speak on federal grants involving criminal justice, juvenile justice, victims of crime, and relevant statistics, or the Law Enforcement Officers Hall of Fame.
- C. All inquiries regarding SCDPS policy matters or disciplinary or criminal issues involving any OHSJP employee must be referred to the SCDPS Communications Director.

X. MEDIA REQUESTS OR CONTACT

- A. Inquiries and Requests
 - 1. All media inquiries and interviews must be authorized and coordinated through the appropriate SCDPS CRO or the SCDPS Communications Office.
 - 2. SCDPS employees (other than CROs) directly contacted by the media will inform the Communications Director before speaking to the media, releasing any agency information or documents, or consenting to be interviewed in any manner.
 - 3. SCDPS employees should expect all media personnel to display valid press credentials at news events or scenes. These credentials should have a photo ID, name, place of employment, and be issued by their news organization and the SC Press or the SC Broadcasters Association.
 - 4. When multiple agencies are involved in an investigation or incident, the investigating agency having primary jurisdiction will be responsible for releasing or coordinating the release of information. [54.1.1 (f)]

XI. SPEAKING ENGAGEMENTS

- A. No employee will accept an engagement to speak on behalf of the SCDPS without prior approval from their supervisor and/or division director, as appropriate.
- B. Deputy and Division Directors may grant permission to their employees to speak at schools, churches, civic organizations and other public groups to promote safety issues. Employees making such safety presentations should not address SCDPS policy issues.

By Order of the Director Date: March 10, 2016
<i>Leroy Smith</i>
Director S C Department of Public Safety
The Original Signed Copy of this Policy is on File in the Office of Strategic Services, Accreditation, Policy and Inspections