

- a. Assuring that an OEA spokesperson will be available to the media twenty-four hours a day.
 - b. Assisting news personnel in covering routine news stories, to include at the scene presence as warranted.
 - c. Preparing and distributing news releases, public service announcements, web site information, commercials, and other information relating to DPS activities.
 - d. Arranging and coordinating news conferences and media events, to include providing the facility and equipment necessary to accommodate the media.
 - e. Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning victims, witnesses, and suspects in accordance with DPS policy and the provisions of South Carolina law.
 - f. Working with other agencies/news media in crisis or disaster situations.
 - g. Serving as a liaison between the general public, news media, the DPS Director, and other DPS personnel, to include authorizing and coordinating interviews.
 - h. Coordinating promotional/advertising/educational programs designed to enhance public and media awareness about DPS and its functions to include providing speakers on various topics.
 - i. Coordinating and disseminating internal publications, such as employee newsletters and brochures.
 - j. Working with local law enforcement agencies to assist in their communications efforts.
 - k. Working with other agencies to coordinate publicity on joint activities.
 - l. Releasing requested public information in a timely manner.
 - m. Publishing a fact sheet for the media and general public that will include but is not limited to, the cost of reports, DPS history, relevant names and addresses, and the procedure for making ride-along requests.
 - n. Coordinating with Highway Patrol Tele-Communications to activate the highway fatalities message telephone line (803-896-8092) to be used by the media during the Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holiday periods. The recorded messages on this line will provide relevant details of all highway fatalities reported to the Highway Patrol during the holiday period.
 - o. Issuing news releases and accompanying photographs involving DPS matters and its law enforcement officers as warranted by way of facsimile transmissions and/or web site up-dates.
 - p. Issuing news releases summarizing the fatalities that occurred during a holiday period or weekend period.
 - q. Coordinating all requests for tours or to photograph or film DPS property or facilities.
2. OEA will consult the Office of General Counsel to ensure compliance with DPS policies, applicable federal and state law, or when a request involves unusual circumstances.

B. Highway Patrol

1. Routine non-policy related media requests and interviews will be handled by the designated Community Relations Officers in each of its seven districts in accordance with the Guidelines for South Carolina Department of Public Safety Public Information Officers.
2. Community Relations Officers will work in conjunction with OEA regarding the release of information pertaining specifically to traffic accidents and other traffic information in their respective districts.
3. All other media requests will be referred to OEA for dissemination in accordance with the Guidelines for South Carolina Department of Public Safety Public Information Officers.

IV. MEDIA REQUESTS/CONTACTS

- A. All media inquiries, requests, and interviews must be authorized and coordinated through OEA, except for non-policy routine Highway Patrol matters such as release of accident/traffic information, which will be coordinated by the Highway Patrol Community Relations Officers or the trooper on the scene.
- B. DPS employees directly contacted by the media will inform OEA before speaking to the media, releasing agency information, documents, or consenting to be interviewed in any manner. OEA will return the media call and if needed coordinate a one on one interview with the appropriate DPS employee and the media.
- C. Media inquiries and requests for information/interviews will be processed by OEA in the order in which the Public Information Officers receive them, or prioritized according to reporters' deadlines, if necessary. DPS personnel will cooperate with OEA to gather information in a timely manner for release to the media.
- D. While attending any and all news events/scenes, the media should come prepared to show credentials (name, place of employment, and photo id) issued by their news organization, the S.C. Press or Broadcasters Association.
- E. Should the need arise to make additions, deletions, or other changes to this policy affecting the news media, a reasonable effort will be made to inform media representatives of such planned changes and solicit their input before final adoption of the modifications.
- F. When multiple agencies are involved in a crime or incident, the investigating agency having primary jurisdiction will be responsible for releasing, or coordinating the release of information.

V. RELEASABLE INFORMATION

A. General

1. Any information that would not adversely affect a pending investigation or jeopardize an individual's safety.
2. Information about the curriculum and instructional practices at the Criminal Justice Academy.
3. General information about grants and the grant process handled through the Office of Highway Safety and Office of Justice Programs.
4. Information regarding DPS, its components, policies, procedures or any statistical compilations to include:
 - a. Number/type of citations issued by DPS law enforcement.
 - b. Accident reports.
 - c. DMV Driver violation record (without inclusion of any personal information).
 - d. Race/gender distribution of DPS personnel.

B. Criminal Matters

1. The arrested person's name, sex, age, residence, employment, marital status and any similar biographical information, except in cases involving juveniles.
2. The substance or text of the charge, complaint, indictment or information.
3. The identity of the investigating and arresting agency and the length of the investigation, if available.
4. The circumstances immediately surrounding the arrest, including the time and place of arrest.
5. The extent of injuries to the victim or assailant.
6. In matters involving sexual offenses, only the age and sex of a victim and general location of crime will be released.
7. Information that may assist in an investigation, such as alerts for persons or vehicles.
8. In cases of serious injury, the victim's name and address may be released after verification of the victim's identity and notification to the victim's next of kin. The county coroner will release the names of all fatality victims.

VI. INFORMATION NOT RELEASED IN CRIMINAL MATTERS

- A. Statements, admissions, confessions or alibis attributable to a defendant.
- B. Information regarding the refusal or failure of a defendant to make a statement.
- C. Information regarding the refusal or failure of a defendant to submit to an examination or test.
- D. The results of any examinations or tests taken by the defendant in the course of the investigation.
- E. Statements concerning the identity, anticipated testimony, or credibility of prospective witnesses.

- F. Any opinions regarding the guilt or innocence of a defendant or the possibility of plea negotiations.
- G. Any opinions regarding the merits of the case or quality of the evidence.
- H. Information received from other law enforcement agencies without receiving prior concurrence from that agency.
- I. Personal information identifying victims of any sexual offenses or child abuse.
- J. Information identifying juvenile suspects.
- K. Names and addresses of witnesses and informants.
- L. Personnel records of DPS employees, except as specified in **VII.B.** below.
- M. Photographs of suspects.

VII. DPS PERSONNEL CRIME/ACCIDENT INVOLVEMENT

- A. Media inquiries will be deferred to the investigating agency having primary jurisdiction.
- B. OEA will confirm the person's status of employment and the person's length of employment with DPS.
- C. The Director, or his designee, and OEA will work closely with the investigating agency to coordinate the release of information and to assure the accuracy of the information.

VIII. CRIME SCENE ACCESS/ RESTRICTION

- A. Official police lines may be established to prevent unauthorized entry into the area of a police incident or crime scene. While direct access to crime scenes may be limited, DPS officers do not have legal authority to stop/prevent the media from taking photographs of or videotaping the incident/scene when such activity occurs beyond police lines. If no police line is established, the media may have access to the scene, as long as their presence/activity does not impede or restrict access to the scene by emergency or law enforcement personnel.
- B. DPS law enforcement officers will not be responsible for the protection of media representatives who choose to enter into a dangerous area.
- C. The commanding officer on the scene will determine who, if anyone and under what circumstance, access to a dangerous area or crime scene will be permitted, providing that:
 - 1. The presence would not jeopardize any police investigation or operation.
 - 2. The presence would not hinder the proper preservation of evidence.
 - 3. The scene is located on public property.
 - 4. The owner of private property, or his agent, consents to the presence of the news media on the property.

D. DPS reserves the right to use a “pool” camera and/or reporter, selected by the media on the scene, where access to the scene by the media must be restricted.

IX. NEWS RELEASES/DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

A. OEA will issue news releases on DPS matters as warranted.

B. All news releases and any accompanying photographs will be posted to the OEA page on the DPS web site (www.scdps.org). This will be the primary means of distributing information to the media in a timely fashion. OEA also will continue to disseminate news releases to interested media via fax.

C. Breaking news and media advisories also will be posted to the DPS web site before being sent to the media via fax.

3-13-01
DATE


B. Boykin Rose
Director