

ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNMENT**3.3.2****B. MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY****PURPOSE**

To establish guidelines regarding media contact and the dissemination of official City information.

POLICY

The City of Redlands seeks to provide information to the public and media that is relevant, complete, accurate, and timely. All laws, regulations, and policies involving the release of information are followed so that maximum disclosure is made without jeopardizing investigations or prosecutions, or compromising the privacy of others.

PROCEDURE

A. Official Spokesperson. The Public Information Officer (PIO) is the City's official spokesperson for all City departments except as indicated in **Part B** or as directed by the City Manager. The PIO promotes and provides background information about City issues, projects, and services to both the media and the public.

- The PIO is available to facilitate communications with the media, including answering questions, responding to developing situations, and offering assistance as needed.
- The PIO is available to all employees for advice, consultation, and assistance in media relations. Upon request, the PIO can be present for any arranged interviews with media personnel.
- When the PIO is unavailable to serve as the City's spokesperson, an alternate spokesperson shall be designated by the City Manager.

B. Public Safety. The Police Chief and Fire Chief may each designate a member(s) of their respective departments to serve as the City's official spokesperson for public safety incidents, including but not limited to criminal reports and fire scene reports. On the scene of an active police or fire incident, the incident commander shall serve as the media contact until the Police or Fire designee is present unless an alternate spokesperson is designated by the Police Chief and/or Fire Chief. The Police Chief and/or Fire Chief or their designee may request the PIO to respond to an active incident and serve as the media contact.

MEDIA CONTACT- RELEASE OF INFORMATION:

Contact with the media shall be limited to the City Manager, Police Chief/Fire Chief or their designee, Public Information Officer (PIO), and Department Directors or their designee. All media contacts/inquiries/interviews should be reported to the City Manager or the PIO immediately.

It is the responsibility of the Department Directors to notify the City Manager and/or the PIO of significant events or issues that occur within their department that may be of interest to the community or media. The City Manager and/or the PIO will determine the most appropriate means to notify the media.

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In case of major Police or Fire activities or public safety incidents, the City Manager and the PIO should be notified as soon as possible, and called in to assist in responding to media inquiries when necessary.

City Employees/Media Contact

If contacted directly by the media, City employees, aside from those designated above should refer calls to the PIO, without making comments. This is especially important in sensitive or controversial situations that could potentially generate negative media coverage. If it is determined to be more advantageous for the media to speak directly to a staff member, the City Manager or the PIO will request the staff member's assistance and coordinate the interview.

If authorized to speak to the media, City staff should remember the following:

- There is no such thing as "off the record." Do not say anything that you do not want reported.
- Respect a reporter's deadlines and respond promptly.
- Don't be afraid to say "I don't know," and offer to call back with the requested information. Take the time to gather your thoughts, consult staff for information, and promptly return the reporter's call.
- Do not speak outside your own area of expertise or knowledge.
- All responses should be fact, not opinion or conjecture. Resist the reporter's encouragement or your own urge to speculate.
- Never provide the media with inaccurate or misleading information.
- Include positive aspects related to the topic, whenever appropriate.
- Notify the City Manager and the PIO following the media contact, with a summary of the interview, possible article to appear, impressions of tone of article, etc.

PRESS RELEASES:

The Public Information Officer is assigned the responsibility of official release of information regarding City business to the public and the media. The exception to this provision is fast-breaking news for major Police or Fire incidents, as well as routine, non-controversial events such as traffic accidents, DUI arrests, etc. If there is any question to the sensitivity of a subject, consult with the City Manager and/or the PIO.

Any press releases that are distributed independently should be immediately forwarded to the PIO. Likewise, any verbal communications to the media in an emergency situation should be reported to the PIO. (See Police Department section for guidelines.)

The PIO is available to assist Police and Fire personnel in writing releases, and should be contacted with any questions regarding composition, style, format, etc.

City Departments seeking publicity events, activities or program/project announcement should send all pertinent information (what, who, why, when, and where) to the PIO. When possible, requests should be sent in writing at least seven (7) days before the requested press release date.

Additionally, City employees are encouraged to notify the PIO of significant events or issues that occur within their area that may be of major interest to the City Council, public or media.

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Elected officials seeking publicity events, activities or program/project announcement related to official City of Redlands business should send all pertinent information to the City Manager's office and/ or the PIO if possible at least seven (7) days in advance of the requested press release date.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

It is recognized that the Police Department receives ongoing media requests and routinely provides information regarding police activities. When providing information to the media, the following guidelines will be followed:

- Any media request for information, including after-hours requests, should be referred to the designated department media representative, or if unavailable, to the first available supervisor.
 - At no time shall any employee of the Police Department make any comment or release any official information to the media without prior approval from a supervisor or the designated department media representative.
 - In situations involving multiple law enforcement agencies, every reasonable effort should be made to coordinate media releases with the authorized representative of each involved agency prior to release of any information by this department.
 - Under no circumstance should any member of this department make any comments to the media regarding any law enforcement incident not involving this department without prior approval of the Chief of Police.

For additional guidance, please see the Media Relations Policy 325 in the Redlands Police Department Policy Manual.

CRISIS OR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS:

During a crisis or major emergency, the procedure for media contact is outlined in the City's Emergency Operation Plan. The plan designates the City's Public Information Officer as the main point of contact for the media. Police and Fire PIOs are the designated alternates and will assist in preparing and disseminating emergency public information. See City of Redlands Emergency Operation Plan.

Media access to emergency scenes

Authorized members of the media shall be provided access to scenes of disasters, criminal investigations, emergencies and other emergency services activities subject to the following conditions (Penal Code section 409.5(d))

- a. The media representative shall produce valid press credentials that shall be prominently displayed at all times while in areas otherwise closed to the public.
- b. Media representatives may be prevented from interfering with emergency operations and criminal investigations.
 1. Reasonable effort should be made to provide a safe staging area for the media that is near the incident and that will not interfere with emergency or criminal investigation operations. All information released to the media should be coordinated through the PIO or other designated spokesperson.

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2. Whenever the presence of media or other aircraft pose a threat to public or officer safety or significantly hampers incident operations, the field supervisor should consider requesting a Temporary Flight Restriction (TFR). All requests for a TFR should be routed through the Incident Commander. The TFR request should include specific information regarding the perimeter and altitude necessary for the incident

and should be requested through the appropriate control tower. If the control tower is not known, the Federal Aviation Administration should be contacted.

Emergency Public Information

During an emergency, the City of Redlands is responsible for the dissemination of information about the emergency to keep the public informed about what has happened, to explain the actions of emergency response agencies and to summarize the expected outcomes of the emergency actions. The Emergency Operation Center Public Information Officer's (PIO) primary role is to disseminate emergency instructions and critical information to the media and the public.

Joint Information Center

To facilitate multi-agency public information communications and coordination, the City of Redlands PIO may activate a Joint Information Center (JIC). A JIC is activated when multiple agencies need to collaborate to provide timely, useful and accurate information to the public.