



SUBJECT: NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS

GOAL: Operations of Incident Information Officer

PURPOSE: To establish uniform guidelines for release of information and responsibilities of Incident Information Officers (IIO) and District personnel in dealing with the news media.

It is the policy of Clark County Fire & Rescue to cooperate with the news media whenever possible, within the guidelines of state public records law and the procedures set forth in this Standard Operating Guideline. As a matter of policy, the District will communicate information to the fullest possible extent without compromising investigations or public safety.

PROCEDURE: **Incident Information Officer Notification**
IIO Staff will be notified by pager or cell phone for the following situations:

- 1). Multiple alarm incidents
- 2). Activation/response of Specialty Rescue Teams
- 3). Mass casualty incidents/multiple patient scenes
- 4). Fires having fatalities
- 5). Major transportation accidents, e.g. aircraft or rail
- 6). Task Force mobilizations.

The IIO may also be notified of other situations as deemed necessary by the Incident Commander (e.g. any incident that is drawing the attention of news media or response of a news media scene, the death or serious injury to an on-duty member, incident at a major establishment, etc.).

Incident Information Officer Responsibilities

The IIO will respond to all incidents as warranted and report to the Incident Commander.

The IIO will work closely with the Incident Commander in gathering incident information.

If necessary, the IIO will work with responding law enforcement to establish a media area inside the perimeter established for the general public. This area should be selected to enable the media to get clear photographs and video of the event, while ensuring their relative safety and non-interference with scene operations. (IIO should consider media distance to the Command Post; ideally far enough removed so as not to interfere with Command operations and to be out of normal speaking voice range, yet close enough for briefings.)



Incident Information Office Responsibilities (Continued):

The IIO will establish and maintain a liaison with all on-scene media representatives and assist them with their newsgathering efforts while ensuring non-interference with District operations and preserving the integrity of any investigation. While on-scene with multiple agency IIOs, District IIO will coordinate with other agency IIOs to preclude release of conflicting information.

The IIO will provide periodic briefings to the media and should, if conditions allow, encourage the Incident Commander and/or District members involved in newsworthy actions, to be available to the media for interviews.

At the conclusion of the incident, the IIO may prepare a news release documenting the event and disseminate it to local news organizations. In cases involving sensitive matter or continuing investigations, the IIO will review the press release with the Incident Commander or fire investigators, before release. Copies of the press release will be routed to the Fire Chief and Fire Marshal, as appropriate.

Fire Investigators, Fire Officers, and Firefighters

In the absence of an IIO, the Incident Commander may appoint a member on-scene to serve as the district's spokesperson.

All personnel are encouraged to cooperate with the media as much as possible. Personnel who speak to the media should limit the information given to response actions taken on arrival that they can confirm and of which they have firsthand knowledge. Even when members cannot accommodate a particular request from the media, they should strive to be as polite and courteous as possible.

Personnel will not release information of a medical or investigatory nature. Release of specific medical information regarding named patient may constitute an invasion of personal privacy, and release of information regarding the cause of an incident may compromise an investigation. Cause of an incident is to be released only by the investigative authority. (For example, a motor vehicle accident would be released by law enforcement, a plane crash would be released by the FAA or NTSB, or a cause of death would be released by a medical examiner.)

If personnel choose to express personal opinions to the media, they must clarify to the media that they are not official spoke persons for the District and that their observations are personal in nature. They will be held accountable for what they say.



Fire Chief

Only the Fire Chief or his designee may release the following information:

- 1). Policy statements
- 2). Organizational changes
- 3). Information regarding disciplinary actions.

Media Access

While mitigation of emergencies remains the first priority of the District, all personnel will extend the utmost courtesy to the media at emergency scenes. Media vehicles and equipment should be permitted to locate closer to the incident scene than the general public, without obstructing fire and rescue operations. The use of scene tape is encouraged to clearly define perimeters for public and media access.

The media will be directed to the media area or to the Incident Information Officer for coordination.

Personnel will not obstruct news media in the performance of their duties, unless personal injury is imminent or fire and rescue operations will be impeded. This includes physically blocking camera shots or in any way preventing photographs, except as previously indicated.

Personnel will take no action either to discourage or encourage the media in photographing or televising anything within their view at the incident scene.

APPROVED

Dennis Mason
Fire Chief