



17-01 News Media

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Rationale

The Toronto Police Service (Service) is committed to open and timely communication with the public and the media. This Service recognizes that the media is a major source of information about police and their activities and plays a crucial role in developing the community's attitudes towards the police. Therefore, it is essential that a co-operative working relationship be maintained with all members of the media.

A professional working relationship between the police and the media is essential to

- keep the community accurately informed of crime and newsworthy incidents
- maintain media involvement in crime prevention programs and community policing issues
- promote community service performed by the Service

Supervision

- Officer in Charge mandatory notification when
 - receiving an inquiry from a media representative
 - aware of an incident likely to be of interest to the media

Procedure

The disclosure of personal information about an individual by the Chief of Police, or their designate, is governed by O.Reg. 265/98 made under the *Police Services Act*.

Information being released should be timely and of sufficient importance to be of benefit to the community. When releasing information to the news media, authorized members shall communicate as openly as possible within the confines of the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA) and in accordance with the guidelines set out in the Corporate Communications Language Guide. They shall respond to requests for information fairly, impartially and with sensitivity, and provide accurate, up-to-date information without disclosing confidential details.

Authorized members shall not speculate or give personal opinions when providing information. Anonymous information such as “according to a police source” or information which could be detrimental to an investigation shall not be given to media representatives. A good guide is not to make comments to a media representative unless you are willing to give your full name, rank and employee number.

Except to the extent required by the MFIPPA, the Director – Corporate Communications shall be responsible for the release of information regarding another member, personal or otherwise. During non–business hours of Corporate Communications, the Duty Senior Officer – Toronto Police Operations Centre (Duty Senior Officer) will be responsible for releasing such information.

Information Release Prohibitions

When disseminating information to the news media, whether verbally or on a TPS 600, authorized members shall **not**

- i) disclose the particulars of any offence related to a domestic violence investigation, including the identity of any person charged, if the disclosure may lead to the identity of the victim
- ii) disclose the particulars of any offence related to a child abuse investigation, including the identity of parents, step–parents, foster parents, legal guardians, other caregivers, or any other person charged if the disclosure may lead to the identity of the victim
- iii) disclose the identity, personal information, address and location of victims without their expressed permission
- iv) disclose the location where victims of violent crimes have been sent for treatment or shelter
- v) disclose the identity, personal information and address of
 - traffic fatality victims if a member of the immediate family requests such information be withheld
 - **a young person wanted for and/or charged with an offence, except as permitted by a youth court judge’s order**
 - witnesses and complainants, without the expressed permission of the person concerned
- vi) disclose the identity of any person giving information to the police, except as may be required by law or court order
- vii) disclose information concerning the accused or victim including
 - the existence of an admission, confession or statement
 - the reputation or character of the person
 - previous police contact with the accused or victim
 - possible guilt or innocence
 - any test offered to, taken by or refused by the accused
 - information that may be of an evidentiary nature or may prejudice a trial
 - particulars of their criminal record, except as provided by *O.Reg. 265/98* made under the *PSA*
 - the accused's residential address
 - the accused's date of birth
- viii) disclose photographs of arrested persons, except when authorized by the Director – Corporate Communications
- ix) disclose amounts of money stolen during a robbery at a chartered bank, trust company, credit union or retail store, except after consulting with the Unit Commander – Special Criminal Investigations – Hold-Up and a Media Relations Officer, or in their absence, the Duty Senior Officer
- x) disclose statistics relative to the race, colour, creed or sexual orientation of persons involved in any form of criminal activity, except when directed by the Chief of Police
- xi) use any historical contact data or regulated interaction report as a basis for classifying an individual as *known to police*.
- xii) disclose information relating to a person’s trans status and/or history unless its disclosure is relevant to the investigation. Do ensure that a person’s chosen name and pronouns are used and, if applicable, only photos that are a reasonable representation of the person’s current likeness.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the case manager of an investigation or authorized member may release the identity, personal information or address of a victim if

- non–publication may adversely affect the health or safety of an individual or the community
- an Amber Alert has been issued
- disclosure is necessary to prosecute an individual or preserve an investigation, or

- in compassionate circumstances to facilitate contact with the next of kin.

Investigators must use discretion when releasing particulars of any incident, which could be deemed personal in nature.

Authorized Member

1. When uncertain on how to respond to a media request shall consult with a supervisor, a Media Relations Officer or the Duty Senior Officer.
2. When receiving a media request for information regarding another member shall
 - comply with the request within the confines of the MFIPPA
 - for other requests, refer the requester to
 - the Director – Corporate Communications
 - the Duty Senior Officer outside the business hours of Corporate Communications
3. Prior to releasing information shall consider
 - the safety of victims
 - whether the disclosure may lead to the identity of the victim
 - the need to protect evidence in order to ensure a fair and impartial trial for the accused person
4. When receiving a media request for information on the medical condition of a person including diagnosis, treatment or evaluation shall only release such information
 - if not in contravention of the restrictions outlined in the section entitled Information Release Prohibitions
 - if it has been received from the attending medical authority, or a hospital media spokesperson with the permission of the hospital authority
 - if non-publication may adversely affect the health or safety of an individual or the community
 - if disclosure is necessary to prosecute an individual or preserve an investigation
 - in compassionate circumstances to facilitate contact with the next of kin
5. When approached by a media representative while at a crime scene shall
 - permit such representative access to the scene except when
 - dangerous or hazardous conditions exist
 - the presence of a media representative may create an obstruction to emergency services personnel
 - the presence of a media representative poses a danger to victims or could interfere with or contaminate the crime scene
 - where the member has direct knowledge of such incident, provide general information concerning the incident, subject to the restrictions outlined in the section entitled Information Release Prohibitions
 - refer questions regarding the investigation to the case manager
 - prohibit the posing of suspects and accused persons for photographing by media representatives
 - permit photographing of police officers in the performance of their duties, if in public view
6. When it is necessary to restrict the movement of media representatives shall make the reasons known to them.
7. When receiving an inquiry from a media representative, or upon becoming aware of an incident likely to be of interest to the media shall
 - notify the Officer in Charge or Unit Commander of the unit concerned

- consult with the Officer in Charge of the unit where the incident occurred prior to issuing a TPS 600
 - respond to media inquiries as appropriate, without an unreasonable delay, subject to the restrictions outlined in the section entitled Information Release Prohibitions
 - provide the information in a fair and impartial manner
 - maintain physical control of evidence being shown to media representatives
8. When it is necessary to withhold or restrict information from a media representative shall
 - consult with a Media Relations Officer or the Duty Senior Officer
 - make the reasons for the restriction known to the media representatives
 9. When receiving a media request for a photograph shall provide photographs taken under the authority of the *Identification of Criminals Act* only if
 - a wanted person is at large
 - public assistance is requested to locate or identify a person
 - in the case of a missing person, permission has been received from an immediate family member to release the photograph and it has been determined the photograph is a reasonable representation of the person's current likeness

➔ *In the case of a dispute amongst immediate family members, Service member will select the photograph that is the most reasonable representation of the person's current likeness in compliance with this Procedure and any applicable unit-specific guides.*
 10. When receiving a media request for a photograph of a member shall provide photograph only with the member's permission.
 11. When releasing a news release shall comply with Procedure 17–03.
 12. When responding to questions about the pending release from prison of an individual identified by Corrections Canada as a high–risk release shall also comply with Procedure 17–04.
 13. When dealing with incidents where the Special Investigations Unit mandate has been invoked shall also comply with Procedure 13–16.
 14. When acting as a case manager may respond to questions posed by media representatives relative to the investigation, subject to the restrictions outlined in the section entitled Information Release Prohibitions.
 15. When receiving a media request for information for a feature interview, or to supply information or comments other than those authorized by this Procedure shall direct such requests to a Media Relations Officer or the Director – Corporate Communications.
 16. When receiving a media request to participate in or organize a feature story shall consult with a Media Relations Officer or the Director – Corporate Communications at the initial stage of the project.
 17. Prior to scheduling a news conference shall
 - consult with a Media Relations Officer or the Director – Corporate Communications during regular business hours
 - during non–business hours, contact a Supervisory Officer – Toronto Police Operations Centre (TPOC) who will contact an on–call member of Corporate Communications

18. When requesting access to information, photographs, film or other material in the possession of media representatives for other than court purposes shall request the assistance of a Media Relations Officer or the Director – Corporate Communications.
19. When publishing a TPS 600
 - shall not include
 - specific addresses (e.g. apartment numbers or single family dwellings)
 - location of the victim, including names of hospitals
 - any of the information outlined in the section entitled Information Release Prohibitions
 - shall include
 - the nature or type of incident
 - a general overview of the incident
 - the location, time and date of the incident
 - the unit involved
 - the time, location and telephone number where further information may be obtained
 - may include
 - a general description of any weapons used, if applicable
 - the particulars of the items taken or involved, if appropriate
 - a description of the suspect
 - a description of the vehicle
 - further police action required, if appropriate
 - photographs, if appropriate
 - public appeal for assistance
20. When including a photograph with the TPS 600 shall e-mail the file in a .jpg format.
21. When publishing a TPS 600 after an arrest shall
 - include
 - the identity of the person arrested
 - the charges laid
 - a general overview of the incident
 - the time, date and location of the arrest
 - the particulars of the arrest
 - the name of the investigating unit
 - the court location, time and date
 - comply with the section entitled Information Release Prohibitions
 - not release photographs of the suspect unless approved by Corporate Communications
 - not give the home address of the accused as a penitentiary or correctional facility, and only give the name of the community where the facility is located
22. Where the conduct of a media representative is inappropriate shall
 - report the situation immediately by telephone to Corporate Communications, or in their absence, the TPOC
 - document the matter on a TPS 649 and submit to the Director – Corporate Communications through the chain of command

Officer in Charge

23. Upon becoming aware of
 - major arrests or major offences
 - information recently supplied to the media
 - developments possibly leading to a major incident
 - road and traffic disruptions

- emergencies, conditions that may be dangerous to the public, or developments potentially leading to these conditions
- positive police actions and activities
- events of human interest
- other newsworthy items

shall

- assign a supervisory officer to attend major incidents where required
- advise the TPOC and Corporate Communications forthwith
- act as a liaison with media representatives and the TPOC and Corporate Communications
- ensure all major events are recorded in the Unit Commanders Morning Report (UCMR)

Unit Commander

24. When assigned as a Unit Commander shall ensure that a co-operative relationship is developed and maintained with local media representatives.

25. Upon learning that a member of the unit has been charged with a criminal offence, which is indictable, dual procedure, or a federal statute shall

- comply with the applicable Service Governance
- report such information to the Director – Corporate Communications during regular business hours, or to the Duty Senior Officer at other times
- ensure a TPS 600 is completed outlining only the following information
 - name, rank/classification and employee number
 - unit assigned
 - date charged
 - specific charges
 - a brief synopsis relating to charges
 - court date, time and location
 - whether suspended from duty or re-assigned to other duties
- forward the TPS 600 by e-mail to Corporate Communications (e-mail address: News Release) during regular business hours and TPOC (e-mail address: TPOC – Toronto Police Operations Centre) at other times

Appendices

Appendix A – Sample News Release

Supplementary Information

Governing Authorities

Federal: Corrections and Conditional Release Act; Identification of Criminals Act; Youth Criminal Justice Act.

Provincial: Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; Police Services Act, O.Reg. 265/98, Disclosure of Personal Information.

Associated Governance

TPSB Policies: TPSB LE-040 Parental & Non-Parental Abduction Investigations; TPSB Policy Regulated Interaction with the Community and the Collection of Identifying Information.

TPS Procedures:

- 01–01 Arrest
- 01–05 Escape from Police Custody
- Chapter 5 Criminal Investigations
- Chapter 7 Vehicle Investigations
- Chapter 10 Emergencies & Hazardous Incidents
- Chapter 11 Crowd Control
- 13–16 Special Investigations Unit
- 17–03 Requests for Information Made Under the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act
- 17–04 Community/Public Safety Notifications

Other: 1.2, 2(1)(e) Standards of Conduct – Police Services Act – Code of Conduct; 1.12 Standards of Conduct – Confidential Information; 1.13 Standards of Conduct – Release of Service Documents; 1.29 Standards of Conduct – Public Comment

Forms: TPS 600 News Release; TPS 649 Internal Correspondence.

➔ *The TPS 600 is a template form available on MS Word.*

Definitions

For the purposes of this Procedure, the following definitions will apply:

Authorized Member – News Releases in reference to news releases means a police officer or civilian holding the rank of manager or higher, or a person authorized by the Unit Commander – Corporate Communications.

Historical Contact Data means all Person Investigated Card (Form 172), Field Information Report (Form 208), Community Inquiry Report (Form 306), and Community Safety Note (Street Check) records submitted into the Service's records management systems prior to January 1, 2017, and may include any such submitted record whether or not it would have been categorized as a Regulated Interaction Report had it been submitted on or after January 1, 2017.

Immediate Family Member – News Media in reference to news media, families are defined by affinity, blood, choice and legality. Immediate family members is defined to include the following regardless of sex: a child, spouse partner, parent or step-parent, sibling, grandparent, grandchild; person with power of attorney or other legal decision making status including healthcare directive; persons related through marriage or adoption, inclusive of chosen family and partners not limited to heteronormative definition of family.

Media Relations Officer means a member of Corporate Communications who has been authorized by the Unit Commander – Corporate Communications to release information to the media.

Media Representative means a member of the news media.

News Conference means an official verbal release of information by an authorized member held in a formal manner for the news media.

News Release means a written release of information to the media on a TPS 600 issued by an authorized member(see 17-01, Appendix A, 'Sample News Release'), and approved by issuing member's supervisor.

Regulated Interaction Report means the electronic record of a Regulated Interaction submitted into the Service's record management system, whether or not identifying information was collected during the Regulated Interaction.

We are dedicated to delivering police services, in partnership with our communities, to keep Toronto the best and safest place to be.

Learn more about our **Service Core Values and Competencies** [here](#)

