



# MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

### 570 – PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

**GENERAL ORDER:** 2015-09  
**ISSUED:** April 2, 2015

**EFFECTIVE:** April 2, 2015

**REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:**  
Captain Regina Howard  
**DATE:** March 17, 2015

**ACTION:** Amends General Order 2014-70 (July 7, 2014)

**WILEAG STANDARD(S):** 8.1.1, 8.1.2

#### **570.00 PURPOSE**

To support and assist members in working with the media, to coordinate the appropriate communication of timely and accurate information, and to provide members with guidelines concerning the release of information to the media and citizens.

#### **570.05 POLICY (WILEAG 8.1.1)**

- A. The Milwaukee Police Department will be responsive and proactive with the media, providing accurate information in a timely and professional manner. This relationship is essential to keep the public well-informed about public safety issues, minimize inaccurate reporting regarding police matters, maintain media involvement in crime prevention and community policing programs, and to promote public services performed by the department.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.1)
- B. The responsibility for the release of all public information is vested in the Office of the Chief and Public Relations, the appropriate Investigations Division, and Open Records.
- C. No statement which may appear to be the opinion of the Milwaukee Police Department or the Chief of Police shall be given to the media without the approval of the Chief of Police or Public Relations.
- D. Statements of department policy, official positions of the department, official responses to criticism of the department, or statements pertaining to pending or ongoing litigation and/or personnel matters shall be made by the Chief of Police or his/her designee.
- E. Nothing contained in these procedures shall be deemed to restrict any member from expressing individual views and opinions, provided that they are clearly expressed as such and not as a statement on behalf of the department.

#### **570.10 GENERAL (WILEAG 8.1.1, 8.1.2)**

- A. In recognition of the fact that a representative government is dependent upon an informed electorate, it is the policy of the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD), in the interest of transparency, that all persons are entitled to the greatest possible information regarding the department's affairs and the official acts of its officers and employees, consistent with applicable federal and state law.

- B. The release of information shall not compromise the integrity of any ongoing investigations.
- C. Department members shall recognize that the media has duties to perform at the scenes of accidents, crimes, disturbances, and emergencies. Members shall not prevent media from performing those duties unless they are interfering with the performance of police, fire, or emergency personnel duties or are placing themselves, members of the public, or department members in jeopardy. The United States Supreme Court has stated that media have no constitutional right of access to the scenes of crime or disaster when the general public is excluded. This includes, but is not limited to, the area inside the yellow crime scene tape.  
(WILEAG 8.1.2.1, 8.1.2.2)
- D. Designated department members shall provide factual and accurate information to the media without jeopardizing the rights of crime victims or of persons accused of a crime and without compromising the security of any investigation or breaching any confidential relationship. If any department member is uncertain as to the application of these guidelines to a specific situation, the member shall refer the media to the manager of Public Relations.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.1, 8.1.1.3)

#### **570.15 STAFF RESPONSIBILITY (WILEAG 8.1.1)**

##### **A. PUBLIC RELATIONS**

1. Official department news releases shall be prepared and disseminated by Public Relations.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.2)
2. A representative from Public Relations will respond to all critical incidents.
3. A representative from Public Relations shall coordinate with other law enforcement agencies or entities regarding the joint release of information in a multi-jurisdictional investigation.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.4)
4. All requests for information which are not directed at a specific current crime scene, investigation, or operation shall be referred to Public Relations.
5. All requests by the news media for specific data or statistics must be directed to the manager of Public Relations.
6. The manager of Public Relations and/or designee will coordinate all media requests for admittance to official areas such as private office areas or areas that are clearly signed "Authorized Personnel Only." These requests shall be granted consistent with security protocol and procedures related to the preservation of confidential investigative data.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.2)

7. Public Relations shall receive copies of public information prior to dissemination outside of the department. District and division commanders who disseminate information outside the department (including lists, summaries, and/or any other routine format) shall forward copies of such information to Open Records and Public Relations.
8. The manager of Public Relations must be notified of all media requests made to Open Records.
9. The manager of Public Relations or a designee of the Office of the Chief shall be responsible for posting on the official Milwaukee Police Department sites on Twitter (@milwaukeekeepolice), Facebook (milwaukeekeepolice), YouTube (milwaukeekeepolice), and The Source ([www.milwaukeekeepolicenews.com](http://www.milwaukeekeepolicenews.com)).

#### B. FIELD INSPECTORS

1. Media inquiries shall be referred to the field inspector after normal business hours.
2. The field inspectors will update the media via email during their shift regarding any major crimes such as shootings, homicides, serious or fatal traffic crashes.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.1)

#### C. DISTRICT COMMANDERS/SUPERVISORS

1. All commanding officers and shift commanders have the authority and the responsibility to respond to media requests regarding routine incidents (e.g., traffic crashes handled by the district) handled by the district.
2. On-scene supervisors at non-critical incident scenes may respond to media inquiries for relevant factual information. The release of information shall be limited to the basic facts of the scene. Requests for detailed follow-up information shall be referred to Public Relations.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.1, 8.1.1.2)
3. Whenever a commanding officer or designee has any media contact in which information was shared, an email summarizing the information shared shall be sent to the manager of Public Relations.

#### D. INTELLIGENCE FUSION CENTER (IFC)

The Intelligence Fusion Center (IFC) is responsible for collecting, storing and disseminating the daily IFC bulletin. The IFC shall operate under federally mandated controls and privacy policy.

#### E. ALL MEMBERS

1. Any member who represents the department by writing articles or columns relating to official department business and containing crime prevention or other law

enforcement information that is intended for publication in any newspaper, magazine, community paper, or other media must make the manager of Public Relations or designee aware of said article or column by forwarding a completed copy to Public Relations prior to publication. This procedure does not apply to members who write to the media as private citizens to express a personal opinion.

2. Members shall receive prior approval from Public Relations for all special media interviews or stories relating to official department business. This does not apply to interviews given to the media at an active crime scene.

#### **570.20 RESTRICTED RELEASE OF CERTAIN INFORMATION (WILEAG 8.1.1)**

There are situations that require the non-disclosure of information. The public's right to know will be balanced against the department's need for confidentiality to protect the integrity of its investigations. The following shall not be released:

- A. Unverified statements from witnesses and victims.
- B. The identity, address or personal information of any victim without their consent.
- C. Any information received from other law enforcement agencies without their authorization to release the information.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.4)
- D. The identity of fatally or critically injured persons before the next of kin has been notified.
- E. The identity, testimony, or credibility of any prospective witness.
- F. The identity or location of any victims of sex offenses.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.3)

#### **570.25 RELEASE OF INFORMATION ON ARRESTED ADULTS AND JUVENILES (WILEAG 8.1.1)**

- A. Inquiries regarding arrested adults shall be referred to the Central Booking Section or district arrest blotters which include the following information:
  1. Name of arrested person.
  2. Race/Sex.
  3. Age.
  4. Location of arrest.
  5. Arresting officers.
  6. Charge.

**Note: When arrests for sexual assault, physical abuse to child, and child neglect have occurred, the arrest address shall not be included on the blotter.**

- B. Inquiries regarding present location, bail or visitation information of the arrested person shall be referred to either CJF or the department location responsible for the arrest.
- C. Adult blotters shall be available for inspection at any time, unless information is being added to the blotter at the time of request, in which case access shall be provided as soon as the blotter has been updated. All requests for copies of the blotter or reports should be directed to Open Records.
- D. The media, but not the general public, shall be allowed the same access to juvenile arrest blotters as they are to adult arrest blotters.
- E. Department members uncertain about releasing information shall consult with Public Relations for advice and direction. In the absence of a member of Public Relations, the department member shall contact his/her supervisor.  
(WILEAG 8.1.1.3)



EDWARD A. FLYNN  
CHIEF OF POLICE

EAF:mfk