

**CITY OF OCONOMOWOC POLICE DEPARTMENT
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**

DATE: September 3, 2021

HISTORY:

SUBJECT: Public Information Officer (PIO)

POLICY NUMBER: 21-095

I. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for the police department's flow of information between our and city departments, the news media, and the general public.

II. Scope

This action will cover the department's Public Information Officer (PIO) as well as all police department personnel who operate at any police department scene or event. Ability to deviate from the guideline lies with the police chief or his/her appointed designee.

III. General

The police department recognizes the need to communicate openly with the general public and the media. The police department will always strive to provide correct and factual information to the public and news media in a timely and impartial manner.

IV. Responsibilities of the Public Information Officer (PIO)

- A. The PIO is responsible for coordinating the flow of information regarding departmental policies, operations, and any specific statements or concerns that could cause publication or circulation regarding our department.
- B. The PIO will act as the main source for media contacts. The Incident Commander (IC) may be responsible for the release of news information at the scene of an emergency. At no time will the emergency operation be compromised for the release of news information.
- C. In the event of an extremely newsworthy incident, the IC will determine the need for the PIO's response. When a response is needed, the IC will notify dispatch and have a PIO dispatched to the scene. Dispatch will notify the PIO and immediately advise him/her of the situation.
- D. A PIO will report to the scene of all major incidents to coordinate media information. If the major incident requires Western Lakes Fire District personnel involvement, the media information will be coordinated between the two agencies.
 1. Major incidents shall be defined, but not limited to:
 - a) multi-alarm fire incidents involving industrial or commercial occupancies
 - b) fire incidents involving fatalities or serious injuries
 - c) hazardous material emergencies or any other incident requiring major evacuations
 - d) extended or complicated rescue operations
 - e) any incident involving death or serious injury to police department personnel
 - f) all serious accidents involving police vehicles resulting in injury or fatality to civilians or fire personnel
 - g) serious aircraft or railroad accidents

V. Information Release Guidelines

- A. Information released to media outlets should relate only to the incident facts.
- B. No determination as to the incident cause shall be released. Questions relating to the cause shall be referred to the appropriate investigating agency (i.e. on-scene fire investigators, fire marshal, and/or law enforcement).
- C. Under no circumstances shall the names of fatalities or injured persons be released unless authorized by the police chief, police captain, or city administrator.
- D. At no time shall police personnel information be provided to the news media. All requests for such information shall be immediately referred to the Police Chief or City Administrator.
- E. Do not release the following information:
 - 1. the identity of a sex crime victim
 - 2. the identity of a juvenile suspect
 - 3. the identity or any identifying-type information on an attempted suicide (for example a sports team captain or a sports team cheerleader)
 - 4. Information on the cause of an active fire investigation
 - 5. Information on interviewed suspects but not charged
 - 6. Any victim information

VI. Hierarchy of Public Information Officers (PIO)

- A. Police Chief
- B. Police Captain
- C. City Administrator
- D. Police Lieutenant
- E. City Economic Development Director

VII. EXCEPTIONS TO THIS POLICY MAY BE AUTHORIZED ONLY BY THE CHIEF OF POLICE

This policy is effective immediately
and will supersede any directives or understandings in conflict