

2.1.2 Working with the Media



YOUR ORGANIZATION
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES

TITLE: Working with the Media

SECTION/TOPIC: Public Information and Education

NUMBER: 2.1.2

ISSUE DATE:

REVISED DATE:

PREPARED BY:

APPROVED BY:

X

Preparer

X

Approver

These SOPs/SOGs are based on FEMA guidelines FA-197

1.0 POLICY REFERENCE

CFR

NFPA

NIMS

2.0 PURPOSE

This standard operating procedure/guideline addresses media rights and responsibilities, personal and professional behavior, using print and broadcast media (interviews, briefings, news releases, media events, advertising, etc.).

It is the policy of the City Fire Department to establish and maintain a positive working relationship with the media.

This directive will establish a standard operating procedure to provide the media with information normally requested from the Fire Department on emergency incidents, to monitor the movements of media personnel for safety reasons, and to establish an operating framework for an Information Sector that will effectively integrate into the overall incident management system.

3.0 SCOPE

This SOP/SOG pertains to all personnel in this organization.

4.0 DEFINITIONS

These definitions are pertinent to this SOP/SOG.

5.0 PROCEDURES/GUIDELINES & INFORMATION

5.1 Media Rights and Responsibilities:

Every effort should be made to provide accurate information. Usually, while gathering information, you will have inquiries from reporters. Provide the information you have at that point and emphasize that this information is preliminary. If it gets to the point that questions from reporters are keeping you from gathering information, use these alternatives:

1. Tell the reporters to gather in one place and that you will return shortly with more information.
2. Request additional manpower from Command to assist in gathering information and remain with the reporters.
3. Tell the reporters to go ahead and get pictures and film footage without interfering with incident operations while you are gathering information. Certified Fire Journalists (CFJ), identified by their green helmets and fire journalist identification, may be assigned to sectors. Journalists without green helmets or the proper identification will not be assigned to a sector and will be required to remain outside the incident perimeter. Make sure and point out the hazard zone. Arrange to meet with them shortly and give them any additional or updated information.
4. If they have deadlines to meet, get a phone number(s) where they can be reached and phone them as soon as possible.
5. BEFORE RELEASING NAMES OF PERSONS SERIOUSLY INJURED OR DECEASED CONFIRM THAT NEXT OF KIN HAS BEEN NOTIFIED. Notifications are usually handled by police and/or hospitals. Ask the Dispatch supervisor to check with PD or hospital to confirm that next of kin has been notified. DO NOT USE THE NAMES OF DECEASED OR SERIOUSLY INJURED PERSONS IN YOUR INTERVIEW OR OVER THE RADIO UNTIL NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN HAS BEEN CONFIRMED. Ask for assistance from the PIO office.
6. Do not speculate as to the cause of a fire or car accident.

5.2 Personal and Professional Behavior:

Command will be responsible for the assignment of an Information Sector on the fireground or any significant incident. As soon as practical, after basic rescue and fire operations are extended,

Command will establish an Information Sector. The establishment of this sector will relieve Command of the responsibility of dealing directly with the media during critical Command stages and provide standard information the media will require to accurately report the emergency. The Public Information Officer (PIO) will report to Command, upon arrival, and establish an Information Sector if not already established.

NOTE: If a fire company or other fire department member has been assigned Information Sector responsibilities the PIO will report to the sector location, receive a briefing from the sector officer, and assist as needed. The PIO may assume sector responsibilities at his/her discretion.

5.3 Using Print and Broadcast Media: (interviews, briefings, news releases, media events, advertising, etc.

Radio designation will be "Public Information Sector."

Individuals assigned to perform this sector function should consider the following general guidelines:

Basic Information:

- A. Timely response
- B. Number of units and personnel on-scene
- C. Human Interest or Safety Information

If possible, add anything to the basic information that will enhance the story; such information might include:

- A. Highly skilled and trained professionals (high rise, technical rescue, etc.)
- B. An extremely hazardous situation
- C. A person or company that did an outstanding job on or off duty fire fighter involvement
- D. A rescue scenario
- E. Projected duration of incident

- This information will assist the reporters in their coverage of the incident and enhance the quality and accuracy of their stories.
- When possible, an interview with the company officer or crewmember is encouraged. Don't be afraid to talk to reporters. They will report the facts you give them.

The individual or company assigned to the Information Sector may be required to escort the media on a tour of the fire damage area following knockdown. This must be cleared with Command and coordinated with operating sectors prior to entering the area.

The Information Sector will be responsible for insuring that all media personnel wear proper protective clothing on the fireground or any other area when needed.

Each Sector Officer is responsible for the safety of media personnel in the area. If media personnel create a safety problem, or hinder operations, they will be requested to move. AVOID CONFRONTATIONS! The policy of the Department is to cooperate with the media.