



# ANN ARBOR FIRE DEPARTMENT

## Standard Operating Procedures – 1.4 Media Relations



### MEDIA RELATIONS

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Effective: March 16, 2018  
Scheduled Review: March 25, 2021  
Replaces: 102 Press Release  
Approved: Fire Chief Mike Kennedy

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#### I. PURPOSE

To establish a process for the fire department's flow of information with the media. The fire department will strive to provide factual and timely information via media releases.

#### II. POLICY

This procedure covers whoever is acting as the fire department's public information officer as well as all fire department personnel who interact with the media.

This SOP shall be used in conjunction with City of Ann Arbor Administrative Policies and Procedures 102, "Guidelines for City Communications." The City of Ann Arbor policy shall override this procedure if there is a conflict.

#### III. ACCESS TO INCIDENT SCENES

The First Amendment to the United States Constitution protects freedom of the press. The media and public are legally allowed to take photographs and record video of incidents from any vantage point in a public space outside of Incident Commander's (IC) designated incident perimeter. This perimeter is best delineated with caution tape.

Fire department personnel have no authority to instruct the public or media not to record something when the media or public are in a public space and outside of the incident perimeter. Law enforcement shall be requested to remove the media or public who are within the incident perimeter.

#### IV. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Per the National Incident Management System (NIMS) Incident Command System (ICS) model, the IC shall serve as the public information officer (PIO) unless the IC has delegated this responsibility.

The PIO is responsible for coordinating the flow of information concerning incident operations. At no time will the emergency operation be compromised for the release of incident updates.

The on-duty battalion chief will be the initial PIO. Upon their arrival, another designated spokesperson can take on the role of PIO.

#### V. SPOKESPERSONS

For fire department related incidents, unless otherwise authorized, the City of Ann Arbor's spokespersons are:

- A. Mayor and city council members
- B. City administrator
- C. City attorney



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- D. City of Ann Arbor public information officer
- E. Fire chief
- F. Assistant fire chiefs
- G. Battalion chief
- H. Fire marshal
- I. Emergency manager

Any media inquiries received by someone not listed above shall be referred immediately to the fire chief. An appropriate response to the media would be, “I am sorry I do not have the full information regarding that issue. I will give your request to the fire chief, who will respond to you as soon as he/she is available.” Please obtain the reporter’s name, phone number, topic of story and deadline, and contact the fire chief as soon as possible.

### VI. NON-INCIDENT RELATED INQUIRES

Requests by the media for information not of an incident nature, e.g., statistical information, personnel information, interviews with employees, or any facet of fire operations including department procedures will be referred to the fire chief.

### VII. INCIDENT MEDIA RELEASE

Following a structure fire or other incident type that is unique in nature, the IC or designated PIO will send an email to the City of Ann Arbor Communications Office [lwondrash@a2gov.org](mailto:lwondrash@a2gov.org) with a brief narrative of the incident. The fire chief and assistant chiefs shall be copied on this email.

AAFD personnel will not send media releases directly to the media. Going through the Communications Office ensures that city leadership is aware of incidents. Additionally, the Communications Office maintains a master list of media contacts to ensure equity of media release distribution. The Communications Office will format the release and will ensure only appropriate information is released.

The following shall be included in the media release email to the City of Ann Arbor Communications Office:

- A. Day and time of the incident dispatch, arrival time of first arriving unit, time when the last unit cleared the scene (does not include fire investigation).
- B. Incident location (only block number of private residence).
- C. List of all responding AAFD units along with any mutual aid or additional agencies, e.g., AAPD, U-M DPSS, MSP, HVA, DTE
- D. Number of patients (if any), what hospital they were transported to, and if the patients had life threatening or non-life-threatening injuries.
- E. Brief summary of what AAFD found on arrival and what actions AAFD took to resolve the incident.
- F. Unless verified by the fire investigator, no determination as to the cause of an incident shall be released. Questions relating to the cause shall be referred to the appropriate investigative agency, e.g., fire investigator, AAPD.

This procedure was reviewed and approved by (February 2018)  
Lisa Wondrash – Communications Unit Manager