



MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

570 – PUBLIC INFORMATION POLICY

GENERAL ORDER: 2025-17
ISSUED: June 19, 2025

EFFECTIVE: June 19, 2025

REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:
Assistant Chief Craig Sarnow
DATE: February 27, 2025

ACTION: Amends General Order 2023-20 (May 5, 2023)

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 the Public Information Office, the appropriate Criminal Investigation Bureau division, and the Open Records Division.
- 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 the Public Information Office.
- 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 the Public Information Office.
(WILEAG 8.1.1.1, 8.1.1.3)

570.15 STAFF RESPONSIBILITY (WILEAG 8.1.1)

A. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE

- 1. Official department news releases shall be prepared and disseminated by the Public Information Office.
(WILEAG 8.1.1.2)
- 2. A representative from the Public Information Office will respond to all critical incidents.
- 3. A representative from the Public Information Office 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 the Public Information Office.
- 5. All requests by the news media for specific data or statistics must be directed to the manager of the Public Information Office.
- 6. The manager of the Public Information Office 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. The Public Information Office 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 the Open Records Division and the Public Information Office.
8. The manager of the Public Information Office must be notified of all media requests made to the Open Records Division.
9. The manager of the Public Information Office or a designee of the Office of the Chief shall be responsible for posting on the official Milwaukee Police Department sites on X ([@milwaukeekeepolice](#)), Facebook ([milwaukeekeepolice](#)), YouTube ([milwaukeekeepolice](#)), Instagram ([milwaukeekeepolice](#)), LinkedIn ([Milwaukee Police Department](#)), Traffic Safety Unit webpage ([mpdtsu.org](#)), Office of Community Outreach and Engagement webpage ([mpdocoe.org](#)), Milwaukee Police Office of Public Relations webpage ([mkepdpio.org](#)) and Atlas One App (Milwaukee Police Department).

B. NIGHT WATCH COMMANDER

1. Media inquiries shall be referred to the night watch commander after normal business hours.
2. The night watch commander 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 the Public Information Office.
(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 the Public Information Office.

D. FUSION DIVISION

The Fusion Division is responsible for collecting, storing and disseminating the daily Fusion Division bulletin. The Fusion Division 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 the Public Information Office or designee aware of said article or column by forwarding a completed copy to the Public Information Office 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 the Public Information Office 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 Division or district arrest blotters which include the following information:
 1. Name of arrested person.

2. Race/Sex.
3. Age.
4. Location and time of arrest.
5. Arresting officers.
6. Charge.

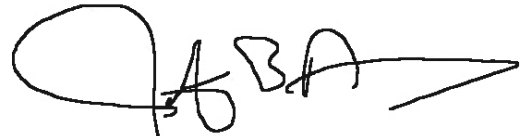
Note: When arrests for sexual assault, physical abuse to child, and child neglect have occurred, the arrest address shall not be included on the blotter.

- 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 the Open Records Division.
- 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 the Public Information Office for advice and direction. In the absence of a member of the Public Information Office, the department member shall contact his/her supervisor.
(WILEAG 8.1.1.3)

570.30 RELEASE OF PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEO TO THE MEDIA OR PUBLIC

- A. The manager of the Public Information Office, or a designee of the Office of the Chief, shall be responsible for releasing any digital still photographs and/or video footage of individuals or vehicles wanted in a crime.
- B. The following guidelines shall be followed when requesting a media release of wanted suspects:
 1. The submitting member shall obtain authorization from a supervisor prior to submitting a media release request to the Public Information Office.
 2. The requesting member shall submit a *Media Distribution Form* (form PE-3E) to the Public Information Office. This form can be located in the N:/ drive Forms folder.
 3. If the footage needs to be cut or edited to conceal victims, witnesses, or uninvolved individuals, members shall edit the video or contact the manager of the Public Information Office at extension 7209 or email at mpdnews@milwaukee.gov for assistance.
 4. Districts/Divisions that maintain their own social media page shall not create their own media release for wanted suspects. A request shall be submitted to the Public

- Information Office in accordance with subsection 2 and districts/divisions can share the media release after the media release is posted on the main Milwaukee Police Department social media page.
5. The Sensitive Crimes Division is authorized to release critical missing information to the media.
 6. Crash Reconstruction Unit and Sensitive Crimes Division members that issue a Wisconsin Crime Alert Network alert shall also submit media distribution requests to the Public Information Office for distribution to all local media contacts.
 7. Members of the Criminal Investigation Bureau assigned to showcase a Crime Stoppers story shall have any release of video footage or photographs approved by the manager of the Public Information Office, or his/her designee, prior to release to Crime Stoppers.
 8. All media releases must be submitted to the Public Information Office. A copy of the video and/or digital still photographs and PE-3E shall be emailed to mpdnews@milwaukee.gov. The submitting member's authorizing supervisor shall also be included on the email.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.B. Norman', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JEFFREY B. NORMAN
CHIEF OF POLICE

JBN:mfk