

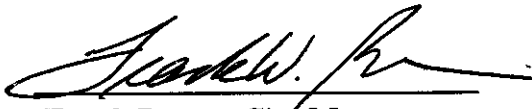
**CITY OF BOULDER**  
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**POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

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**MEDIA POLICY**

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** June 1, 2005

**LAST REVISED:** June 1, 2005



**Frank Bruno, City Manager**

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**I. POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the city of Boulder to cooperate with the media and to maintain an atmosphere of open communication. Information shall be released to the media in an impartial, accurate and timely fashion. Because the media often work on tight deadlines, it is important that all departments respond as soon as practical when the City Manager's Media Relations staff requests information or a spokesperson. City of Boulder employees are expected to use good judgment and to represent the city in a professional manner.

**II. PURPOSE**

Developing and maintaining a positive and mutually beneficial relationship with members of the news media is essential to the city of Boulder's goal of keeping the public informed. Achieving an effective relationship between city officials and the media requires honesty, trust, and a dedication of resources and staff. The city of Boulder is committed to maintaining positive relations with the media, allowing them easy access to the decision makers and providing a clear understanding of decision-making processes and relevant information.

**III. RESPONSIBILITIES FOR NEWS RELEASES**

It is ultimately the responsibility of the City Manager's Media Relations staff to send news releases to the public/media. Releases will be sent to the media list and will be posted on the city of Boulder's Web site. News Releases are released using the following guidelines:

Each department will have a designated Media Liaison/PIO. That person is responsible for coordinating news releases from the department and sending them to the City Manager's Media Relations staff for final edits and for release. News releases from the Police and Fire Departments may be sent out by the Public Safety Public Information Officer (PIO). Guidelines for preparing a news release are available on the Public Affairs Intranet page. A list of current Media Liaisons is also available on the Intranet.

#### **IV. ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC INFORMATION**

Directors shall be responsible for ensuring that the Media Liaison in their departments contact the City Manager's Media Relations staff as soon as practical about major incidents and other events that may generate media interest. Directors shall be responsible for assigning a staff member to cover for the Media Liaison, including the Public Safety PIO, during vacations, sick time or if the Media Liaison resigns.

#### **V. PROCEDURES**

##### **A. Media Inquiries**

The City Manager's Media Relations staff should be contacted by the Media Liaison if a media inquiry is about a significant, sensitive or controversial issue that may generate further press coverage. Designated city of Boulder employees will respond to the media in a courteous, timely and factual manner. Employees will respond to media inquiries as soon as practical, as reporters are often working on deadline. Likewise, public records requests from the media will be fulfilled as soon as practical and at least within the time frame required by the Access to Public Records Policy and state law. Generally, the Media Liaison in each department will take the initial call from the media and may either answer their questions or refer them to another employee that is an expert on the topic. Efforts should be made to notify that employee of the referral. Employees who receive a call directly from the media should inform the Media Liaison in their department (according to department policy).

##### **B. Interviews**

The City Manager's Media Relations staff and/or the designated department Media Liaison is responsible for assisting the media by conducting interviews himself or herself or coordinating interviews with other city staff. Employees contacted directly by the media for interviews shall notify their Media Liaison. Check with your Media Liaison for departmental guidelines on who should conduct interviews. Employees must remember that when talking with the media all conversations should be considered "on the record" and subject to being quoted.

*Content Restrictions.* The city of Boulder does not attempt to restrict the dissemination of factual information. However, certain subject matter must not be commented upon by employees due to the inherent conflict that can arise from city employees being participants in certain kinds of news gathering.

a. City of Boulder employees shall not, during working hours or with city equipment, comment for or about situations occurring in other jurisdictions without the approval of their Department Director.

b. City employees who are not policy makers shall not comment on policies during working hours or using city equipment without prior approval from the policy maker to whom they report. City Council ultimately decides public policy for the organization. Employees who are policy makers include the City Manager, Assistant City Managers, City Attorney, Deputy and Assistant City Attorneys and Department Directors. Department Directors may authorize specific department

staff members to comment on department level policy issues. Policy making employees are not required to comment on matters of policy, but may be subject to discipline for expressing policy positions that are contrary to either established city policy or the direction of their immediate supervisor. Policy making employees must take reasonable steps to confirm city policy before making comments on matters of policy. This policy shall not be construed to prohibit city of Boulder employees from commenting on city policies outside of working hours and without the use of city equipment when necessary to represent their personal interests or express their point of view.

c. It is recognized that all employees have the right to their personal points of view regarding any issue. However, the expression of personal points of view on matters of city business or city policy may not be done with city stationery or equipment, or during working hours. Therefore, city employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper expressing their personal point of view may not use official city stationery or equipment or write letters during working hours. City employees who write letters to the editor of any newspaper during working hours expressing their professional point of view as a city of Boulder employee must first obtain Director approval. Policy makers may express their independent professional views on any matter of city business or policy in their capacity as official representatives of the city of Boulder. If an employee chooses to identify himself or herself as a city employee in any personal letter or e-mail to the editor concerning a personal point of view on a matter of city business or policy, or if an employee is likely to be recognized by name as a city employee, he or she must include language which states the views set forth in the letter do not represent the views of the city, but rather, are the employee's personally held opinions. Similar disclaimers must be given if an employee addresses a public meeting, participates in a radio talk show, or is interviewed for a radio or television program unless the employee is officially representing the city. Employees who are representing the city in any of the above formats should be and must identify themselves as an official spokesperson for the city.

d. Nothing in this policy shall be construed to limit employee communications in any manner when necessary to represent themselves or recognize bargaining units on matters of employment concerns.

#### C. News Releases

Department Media Liaisons shall send all news releases and news briefs to the City Manager's Media Relations staff for final edits and for release to the public/media. News releases from the Police and Fire Departments may be sent out by the Public Safety Public Information Officer (PIO).

#### D. News Conferences

News conferences shall be held only in connection with major events of concern to the community. The City Manager's Media Relations staff shall be involved in all planned news conferences. Where the city and any representative employee association have reached an impasse in negotiating a contract or in regard to a labor matter, the City Manager's Media Relations staff shall not be involved in

any such news conference. Representatives of employee associations may participate in news conferences related to contract negotiations or other labor matters, or an impasse without being in violation of this Media Policy.

**E. Access to Crime Scenes and Critical Incidents**

City of Boulder employees shall be courteous to news media representatives at crime and critical incident scenes. *The Media should refer to the city of Boulder Police Department's General Order 103 – Media Relations, for complete guidelines for crime scenes and critical incidents.*

1. At such scenes, city of Boulder personnel shall ensure that the media respect the established perimeter. Members of the media shall receive no more or less access to an incident scene than members of the general public and shall be directed to the media staging area if one has been established.

2. The Public Safety PIO, with approval of the scene commander, may grant closer access to news personnel and their equipment, to the degree that it does not interfere with incident operations and is in accordance with police department policy.

3. No city of Boulder employee shall prohibit the media from news-gathering practices, including photography and interviews, outside the established perimeter. Employees and others may be photographed in public places.

4. Only the Chief of Police, on scene commander, or Public Safety PIO shall release information to the news media at/or regarding crime and critical incident scenes.

5. At critical incident scenes, city personnel shall work in close cooperation with the media to ensure that live broadcasts do not disclose any information that could endanger law enforcement personnel, city employees or the general public.

**F. Public and Criminal Justice Records**

Public records requests from the media will be fulfilled as soon as practical and at least within the time frame required by the Access to Public Records Policy.

Refer questions about the Access to Public Records Policy to the City Attorney's office or your Media Liaison.

**G. Joint Investigations or Operations Involving Another Agency**

In a multi-jurisdictional operation, the lead agency is responsible for providing or coordinating the release of public information. If a city department is the lead agency, that department may share information as needed with all involved agencies in advance of public dissemination.

**VI. INFORMATION RELEASE GUIDELINES**

The release of information is subject to restrictions placed by applicable local, state, and federal laws. No employee of the city of Boulder shall knowingly release any information that would hamper the successful conclusion of an investigation or jeopardize the safety of affected persons. *All requests for information about criminal incidents or investigations shall be referred to the Public Safety PIO. The requests will be handled per Boulder Police Department General Order 103- Media Relations, and all applicable local, state and federal laws.*

**A. Information that can be released in routine situations:**

1. The general nature of the incident that has occurred
2. The approximate location (by hundred block or intersection)

3. The time and nature of the call to the agency or department
4. The person responding to the incident
5. The time of the response to the incident
6. The general nature of the agency or department's response

B. Information that shall NOT be released (except by those authorized by their department to release such information):

1. Names, addresses, and any other identifying information of any persons involved
2. Active criminal investigative information, active criminal intelligence information, and surveillance techniques – unless otherwise authorized by the Chief of Police.
3. Names of informants
4. Names of undercover personnel
5. Supplemental or investigative reports until such time as the case is closed or as authorized by the Chief of Police
6. Grand jury testimony and proceedings
7. Information about active personnel investigations, except as governed by state law and/or department policy
8. Home address, telephone numbers, and familial information of city employees and law enforcement personnel unless there is a legitimate law enforcement purpose for doing so
9. Any other information that could jeopardize the successful conclusion of an investigation or prosecution
10. Any other information prohibited by state law from public disclosure

#### **VII. MEDIA RIDE-ALONGS**

Job shadowing allows the media to accompany city of Boulder employees as they perform their duties. Employees shall not permit the media to accompany them onto private property nor shall they assist in securing permission for access from property owners. Job shadowing with the police department is governed under *Boulder Police Department General Order 302, Ride-along Program*.

#### **VIII. TRAINING**

City of Boulder employees who are identified by their department directors as potential media interviewees shall attend media relations training. The training shall be offered periodically by the City Manager's Media Relations staff.

#### **IX. ETHICS**

It is the policy of the city of Boulder to treat the media courteously, timely, factually and ethically. It is expected that the media will respond in a like manner and follow ethical guidelines established by their profession. Members of the media and city of Boulder employees who believe they were treated unethically are encouraged to contact the City Manager's Media Relations staff for assistance.

**X. MEETINGS WITH THE MEDIA**

Reaffirming this municipality's commitment to positive media relations, the City Manager's staff shall meet on a regular basis with media representatives to discuss issues of mutual interest or concern. Proposed or anticipated changes in department policy or procedures dealing with the media also shall be addressed at this time.

**XI. PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

The city of Boulder is committed to ensuring that all communications staff members have the opportunity to participate in and support professional development, including associations and organizations. For example, the city of Boulder Police Department may participate in regional law enforcement – media associations to improve understanding between the two professions.

**XII. LIVE COVERAGE AGREEMENTS**

Live coverage agreements establish voluntary guidelines for the broadcast of live pictures or information emanating from critical incident scenes such as hostage situations, barricaded subjects, and similar ongoing crises. The city supports the creation, implementation, and use of such agreements.

**XIII. MEDIA CREDENTIALS AND IDENTIFICATION**

The city of Boulder acknowledges representatives from recognized media organizations who carry and display photographic identification issued by their employer. Media representatives may be required to show such identification if requesting special access. Anyone else shall be considered a member of the general public. City employees may not be disciplined for unauthorized contact with the media if the member of the media involved has not identified herself or himself as a media representative.

**XIV. ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION**

It is the policy of the city of Boulder to pursue alternative methods of disseminating information directly to the public. These may include community newsletters, government access cable television shows, Web sites, public appearances, public area bulletin boards, and other means.

**XV. CONSTRUCTION AND INTERPRETATION**

The City Manager's Office will interpret this policy.

**XVI. EXCEPTIONS/CHANGE**

Any exception to this policy may be granted only by the Assistant City Managers or the City Manager. This policy supersedes all previous policies covering the same or similar topics. This policy may be reviewed and changed at any time.

**XVII. DISCIPLINARY ACTION**

Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.