



RUSSELLVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
POLICY MANUAL

Policy Number:
Section:
Original Date:
Revised Date:

PURPOSE

It is the policy of the Russellville 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 Officer that will effectively integrate into the overall incident management system.

POLICY

Command will be responsible for the assignment of a Public Information Officer (PIO) on the fireground or on any significant incident. The PIO will relieve Command of the responsibility of dealing directly with the media during critical Command stages and provide standard information to the media to accurately report the emergency.

The Public Information Officer (PIO) will report to Command, upon arrival. The PIO will work through Command and interface with the public, media, and/or with other agencies with incident-related information needs. The PIO will gather, verify, coordinate, and disseminate accessible, meaningful, and timely information on the incident for both internal and external audiences. The PIO also will monitor the media and other sources of public information to collect relevant information and transmit this information to the appropriate components of the incident management organization. In incidents that involve PIOs from different agencies, the Incident Commander or Unified Command designates one as the lead PIO. The Incident Commander or Unified Command approves the release of incident-related information. In large-scale incidents, the PIO participates in or leads the Joint Information Center (JIC).

The transmission of information may be in one or more formats including email, text, social media and in-person. The information release format may be dependent on the magnitude of the event.

PIOs should consider the following general guidelines:

Basic Information:

1. Timely response
2. Number of units and personnel on-scene
3. Scene location and address
4. Call type, basic scene information, and action taken
5. Human Interest or Safety Information
6. Incident status

Approved

Fire Chief

1 of 2



RUSSELLVILLE FIRE DEPARTMENT
POLICY MANUAL

Policy Number:
Section:
Original Date:
Revised Date:

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

1. Highly skilled and trained professionals (high rise, technical rescue, etc.)
2. An extremely hazardous situation
3. A person or company that did an outstanding job on or off-duty firefighter involvement
4. A rescue scenario
5. 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.

On occasion, an interview with a chief officer, company officer or member is required. Every effort should be made to provide accurate information.

Usually, while gathering information, you will have inquiries from reporters on scene. 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.
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. DO NOT USE THE NAMES OF DECEASED OR SERIOUSLY INJURED PERSONS IN YOUR INTERVIEW OR OVER THE RADIO. Ask for assistance from the PIO office.
6. Do not speculate as to the cause of a fire, car accident or other emergency.

On occasion it may be beneficial or required to escort the media on a tour of the incident area. This must be cleared with Command prior to entering the area.

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

The PIO 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.

Approved

Fire Chief

2 of 2