

***PURPOSE***

Much of the work performed by firefighters catches the attention of the public and the media. Therefore, the media may arrive at various scenes where personnel are working. It is important for the department to provide for the safety of the media while they are gathering information at an emergency scene, and it is important that department personnel provide them with as much information that is lawfully and ethically possible.

OBJECTIVE

To provide personnel with a guidelines that define ways to provide for the safety of media officials at emergency incidents, and to define what types of information can be released by ranking officers at the emergency scene.

SCOPE

All Personnel

MEDIA SAFETY

Media representatives shall be treated with courtesy and respect at all times while operating at emergency incidents.

Media representatives shall not be allowed into areas deemed hazardous by the Incident Commander (IC) or Incident Safety Officer. If media representatives refuse to vacate hazardous areas, law enforcement should be requested to escort them to a safe location.

If possible, the IC should assign an escort to media representatives while they are collecting video and/or pictures at the incident. Having a trained escort will keep media officials safe from dangers unknown to them and will help ensure scene security.

Fire department personnel shall not provide media representatives access into private dwellings and/or businesses without the consent of the owner.

MEDIA BRIEFINGS

Media information shall only be released by the IC or their designee.

At the earliest convenience, the IC should provide the media with information regarding the incident. However, safe and efficient incident management must be maintained and assured before breaking to talk to media officials. If the IC can not immediately speak with the media, they should advise them that they or a designee will speak with them as soon as possible.

Large incidents may require the establishment of an assigned Public Information Officer (PIO) and formal briefing locations and times.

The Escambia County Office of Public Information and Communication is available to assist the IC with coordination of media relations at emergency incidents. A Public Information and Communication representative may be requested through dispatch.

RELEASE OF INFORMATION

The IC, or their designee, may release basic information to the media regarding the emergency. This information may include:

- The address of the incident
- The name of the business (if applicable)
- Numbers of personnel and apparatus that responded to the incident
- The time of dispatch and on-scene times by fire department units
- Numbers of civilians and/or firefighters injured or killed (NO HIPPA INFORMATION)
- Basic information regarding the situation found by arriving units and actions taken by Fire-Rescue personnel
- The cause of fires determined to be accidental by the IC or State Fire Marshal's Office

The following information should not be released by any personnel at the scene of an emergency:

- The name(s) of civilians and/or firefighters injured or killed
- Detailed information regarding the types of injuries sustained by civilians or firefighters that could be in violation of HIPPA
- The probable or actual "at-fault" party involved in a vehicle accident
- Any information that could be considered negative or detrimental to other responding organizations or personnel
- Information regarding the cause, probable cause, or circumstances surrounding any fire that is under investigation by the State Fire Marshal's Office or considered suspicious in nature.