

CRITICAL INCIDENT PUBLIC INFORMATION PLAN	Document Number	GO 709
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1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to set in place a plan for the public release of information on critical incidents.

2. PERSONS AFFECTED

All personnel.

3. POLICY

It is be the policy of the Hawai'i Police Department that relevant information on critical incidents shall be released to the public in a timely manner, with due care not to interfere with an active investigation or compromise the safety of officers or the public.

This policy is intended to promote the transparency and accountability of the department while ensuring public safety is maintained.

4. DEFINITIONS

4.1. **Media Liaison** – An individual that does liaising directly with the people responsible for producing the news and features in the mass media. The goal of media relations is to maximize positive coverage in the mass media on critical incidents.

4.2. **Public Information Officer (PIO)** – is the communication coordinator or spokesperson for the Hawai'i Police Department.

4.3. **Critical Incidents** – As defined under General Order 604, Critical Incident.

5. PROCEDURES

5.1. Urgent Public Notification

5.1.1. When a Critical Incident occurs, information shall be disseminated in a timely manner to the public for the purposes of awareness and safety. This shall be in accordance with the policies and procedures contained in GO 701 Police – News Media Relations and PM 1.4 Nixle Procedures. The following methods should be considered for notifying the public:

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- a. A Short Message Service (SMS) notification (e.g. Nixle) relating police activity, identifying the location, and any other information deemed necessary for public knowledge and safety;
- b. An updated SMS notification should the activity cease, the location change, investigation continues, or any other information deemed necessary for public knowledge and safety;
- c. A media release and/or a press conference providing additional details. The appropriate Criminal Investigation Division, under the supervision of their Assistant Chief shall approve the content of media releases and may designate personnel to disseminate information to the press.

5.1.2. In addition to the notification methods outlined in section 5.1.1, although not utilized as part of the public information function, commanders may utilize departmental accounts for services that are approved, such as Nixle, Facebook, Twitter, or other web-based services to send alerts.

5.2. Public Release of Information

5.2.1. The Police Chief or designee will review each critical incident to determine what information is appropriate for public release.

5.2.2. In the case of an officer involved shooting, the Media Liaison shall be the Assistant Chief of the Operations Bureau assigned to conduct the investigation. In all other cases, the Major of Administrative Services shall be the department's primary Media Liaison.

- a. For all officer(s) involved shooting incidents, the Police Chief or designee shall be the spokesperson for the department.
- b. Exception: In the ICS protocol the incident commander may appoint a PIO. If the incident later becomes a critical incident that is not an officer involved shooting, the PIO will be relieved by the Media Liaison who is the Administrative Major or designee.

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- 5.2.3. The review shall include an assessment of all relevant factors, including an assessment of any threats to the safety of the involved officer or the officer's family.
- 5.2.4. The determination of what information to release will be made on a case-by-case basis, giving due consideration to the safety of those involved, the integrity of the criminal investigation, and the public's interest in disclosure.
- 5.2.5. As soon as practical following a critical incident, verified facts may be released to the public, including, as appropriate, the time, location and outcome of the incident, and non-identifying information about the officer(s) involved, such as age, rank and years of service.
- 5.2.6. Unless otherwise determined by the Police Chief, the identity of the officer(s) involved shall not be publicly released immediately following the critical incident in consideration of the officer's welfare, and in order to ensure sufficient time to properly consider the situation, including the existence of any threats.
- 5.2.7. The officer's identity will not be released without conducting a review of the situation including any credible threats against the officer or officer's family or other extenuating circumstances.
- 5.2.8. Prior to publicly releasing the name of an officer involved in a critical incident, the officer shall be notified.
- 5.3. Release of Body Worn Cameras (BWC) Data
 - 5.3.1. Release of BWC data to any person outside the department by any means is prohibited unless prior written approval is given by the Police Chief or designee.
 - 5.3.2. Requests, including media inquiries, for viewing or a copy of a BWC recording, may only be authorized by the Police Chief or designee in accordance with Department policy and law.

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5.4. Other Agency Involvement

5.4.1. In cases where the Hawai'i Police Department is not the lead agency in a defined critical incident, the agency or organization having jurisdiction will have in place their own defined media plan. In these instances the Hawai'i Police Department will assist and defer comments and inquires to the designated public information officer of the lead agency.