



BURLINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT DEPARTMENT DIRECTIVE

DD30 Public Information

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PURPOSE: To establish guidelines for Department members when providing information to the public via media outlets. The Burlington Police Department is committed to open, transparent, and inclusive practices with all members of the public while adhering to the tenets of the Vermont Public Records Law.

POLICY: It is the policy of the Burlington Police Department to provide relevant and timely information to the media and the public. Release of information shall not intentionally violate privacy or jeopardize ongoing incidents and investigations. Access to information and incident locations (scenes) will be balanced with public safety concerns, investigation integrity, and with full consideration given to Vermont's Public Records Law.

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I. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Public Record:** any information written or recorded, regardless of physical form or characteristics, which is produced or acquired during public agency business.
- B. **Juvenile:** any person under the age of eighteen (18) years of age¹.
- C. **Media Release:** any written document prepared for the purpose of sharing details of a Burlington Police Department incident or matter with the public. Such releases will be disseminated via the department's media e-mail distribution list.
- D. **Public Interest:** any event or incident which impacts or concerns public safety, public officials, or public places. Any event that the public has witnessed or which could reasonably be expected to cause public concern or alarm.
- E. **Officer in Charge (OIC).** The highest-ranking on-duty officer commanding a particular division.

¹ Should State law change the age of when a person is considered an adult in the criminal legal system, this policy will follow the State's definition in those cases.

II. MEDIA RELEASE RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Chief of Police or designee shall serve as the Public Information Officer. The role of the Public Information Officer includes but is not limited to.
- i. Coordination with the Administration on policy or positions unrelated to police operations.
 - ii. Maintaining professional relationships with members of the media.
 - iii. Scheduling press conferences surrounding noteworthy events or Department initiatives.
 - iv. Assisting the media with their coverage of the Department.
 - v. Annual review of this policy for efficacy and compliance with Section 12.6 of the Comprehensive Personnel Policy Manual.
- B. All Department members shall be prepared to interact with members of the media. Department members who are approached by the media for specific information or for comments should refer the request to the Officer in Charge. In the event of a serious incident (e.g. an officer involved shooting, homicide, etc.) employees shall refer all media requests to the Chief of Police or their designee.
- C. A media release will be issued as soon as practical concerning incidents of public interest, arrests for serious crimes, crimes of violence, serious crashes, road closures, or other hazardous scenes. Additionally, media releases may be used in instances when the public's help is needed as part of an active investigation.
- i. Exceptions to this section may be made if a media release could compromise an ongoing investigation. Any exception made requires approval by the supervisor of the investigation.
- D. All media releases shall be constructed using the approved Burlington Police Media Release template and approved by the Officer in Charge prior to dissemination. All media releases shall be delivered using the media e-mail distribution list maintained by the department. Completed media releases shall be incorporated into the record management system as part of the incident reporting.
- E. Death investigations are often performed in response to an incident of public interest. A media release may be issued within 24 hours for all death investigations except in the following instances:
- i. Suicides with no public interest,
 - ii. Natural deaths with no public interest, or
 - iii. Any death investigation when the release of information would erode the integrity of the investigation.

The identity of any decedent shall be withheld pending notification of next to kin.

- F. Media access to an incident scene shall be the responsibility of the on-scene Officer in Charge and should be restricted to the outer perimeter. Restricted access to incident scenes is necessary for public safety, evidence integrity, and to preserve the rights afforded to victims of crime. At no time will Department members allow members of the media to trespass onto private property in order to gain access to an incident location.
- G. Department members assigned to a task force, e.g. Chittenden Unit for Special Investigations, Drug Task Force, shall comply with the media procedures established by their respective task force.
- H. Department members shall respond promptly and professionally to requests from the media.
- I. Inquiries concerning Department policies, procedures, personnel or relationships with other entities shall be referred to the Chief of Police.
- J. The Department shall issue weekly logs related to incidents and arrests to the media via the Media Group list serve.

III. INFORMATION TO BE RELEASED

- A. Name, age, city / town of residence. (DO NOT RELEASE DATE OF BIRTH);
- B. Nature and description of incident;
- C. Date, time, and street of incident occurrence;
- D. Offense(s) for which a person has been arrested or issued citation;
- E. Burlington Police Department booking image if available;
- F. Disposition of arrested or injured persons;
- G. The identity of any crime victim except as outlined in section 4 of this policy;
- H. Name of the investigating Officer and approving Supervisor.

IV. INFORMATION NOT TO BE RELEASED

- A. Any information about a witness to or victim of a crime where information could jeopardize their safety or otherwise erode the integrity of an investigation;
- B. Any information that could identify a victim of a sex crime or domestic assault;
- C. Information related to criminal investigations if it relates to the detection and investigation of a crime and could reasonably:

- i. Interfere with an investigation or other enforcement proceedings;
 - ii. Deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or impartial adjudication;
 - iii. Constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
 - iv. Disclose the identity of a confidential source;
 - v. Disclose techniques and procedures or guidelines for law enforcement investigations or prosecutions, which would reasonably be expected to risk circumvention of the law; or endanger the life or physical safety of an individual.
- D. Sealed or expunged files;
- E. Autopsy reports;
- F. Medical information;
- G. Uniform crash reports;
- H. Any statements about the character, reputation, number of police involvements or criminal record of a person. A summary of an arrested person's criminal convictions may be released if that information is contained in the affidavit filed with the Court and is public;
- I. Comments regarding the existence of a confession, statements made by a suspect; including the failure or refusal of the suspect to make a statement or confession;
- J. Comments as to the opinion of the guilt or innocence of a suspect, merits or weight of the evidence of any case;
- K. Questions about whether information is publicly releasable shall be referred to the Chief.

V. JUVENILES

- A. Any information that could reveal a juvenile's identity will not be released until such time that the State's Attorney determines whether the juvenile will be charged in criminal court;
- B. Any information that could reveal a juvenile's custody status shall not be released;
- C. Juvenile arrests, including records or information reflecting an initial arrest or citation of a juvenile will not be released if a juvenile is being referred to family court;
- D. The identity of a juvenile crime victim will not be released;
- E. The identity of juveniles will be released in the following instances:
 - i. If the juvenile is an operator or occupant in a motor vehicle crash;

- ii. When the release of a juvenile's name, including a photograph, would be of material aid in locating a missing person; or
- iii. As outlined in Section VI of this policy.

VI. INFORMATION PERTAINING VERMONT CIVIL VIOLATION COMPLAINTS (VCVC)

A. Information from records pertaining to issued Vermont Civil Violation Complaints issued to any person (including juveniles) may be released, except for the following:

- i. The photograph of the individual.
- ii. Date of birth.
- iii. Social Security number.
- iv. Driver's license number.
- v. Physical address / mailing address.
- vi. Telephone number.

Reviewed and adopted by the Burlington Police Commission on July 22, 2025.



Shawn Burke, Interim Chief of Police

July 23, 2025
Effective Date