

**Event 9 – Critical Incident  
Session 20 – Media Relations  
LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

**Date Revised:** 11/5/19

**Goal:** To teach recruit officers how to effectively work in partnership with the media and provide participants with a basic overview of applicable laws, department policies and procedures during media contacts.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the Officer’s roles and responsibilities when dealing with the media [**LAPD Manual Section 4/298.40**]
- Identify the roles of the media and their needs [**LAPD Manual Section 1/420.10**]
- Understand the public’s right to request information [**LAPD Manual Section 1/440.10**]
- Identify the laws regarding media access at an incident [**LAPD Manual Section 1/420.70**]
- Explain the responsibility to provide information to the media [**LAPD Manual Section 1/440.40**]
- Discuss LAPD policy and procedures when notifying Media Relations and news worthy events [**OCOP 02-18-15 Notice 1.1**]

**Session Time:** 1 hour

<p><b>Resources:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laptop</li> <li>• Projector</li> <li>• Speakers</li> <li>• Video-Media Relations</li> <li>• Media Relations Guide</li> <li>• Classroom with tables</li> <li>• White board</li> <li>• Dry-erase markers</li> <li>• Handouts-Case Studies, Manual Section: 1/420</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Session Summary:</b> The students will learn the appropriate actions to take when dealing with the media. This will be facilitated by video, case studies, scenario demos, and classroom discussion.</li> </ul>	
<b>Outline</b>	<b>Instructor Notes</b>
<p>I. Media Relations A. Introduction to Media Relations</p>	<p><b>[Introduction Video]</b> Media Relations-The value of the media to the police department and the community.</p> <p><b>[Assign Groups]</b> Break up class into 6 groups.</p> <p><b>Handouts-</b>Manual Section 1/420;</p>

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How to interact effectively with the media and maximize investigative productivity.</li><li>2. Various types of media and how they operate.</li><li>3. Understanding the needs, the media have.</li><li>4. Strategies for coordinating and controlling information during multi-agency investigations.</li><li>5. Prepare an effective News Release and Advisory</li><li>6. Keys to the success of an effective news interview</li><li>7. Understand of Social media and how it can be used by law enforcement</li><li>8. When it comes to the media, keep in mind that the things we say and or do are never off the record.</li></ul> <p>B. Role of the Department</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. 420.20 ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT. The Department actively seeks to establish a cooperative climate in which the news media may obtain information on matters of public interest in a manner which does not hamper police operations. However, certain information must be withheld from the news media to protect the constitutional rights of an accused, to avoid interfering with a Department investigation, or because it is legally privileged. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 4/298.40]</b></li></ul> <p>C. Types of Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Television<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. CBS</li><li>b. NBC</li><li>c. ABC</li><li>d. KCAL</li><li>e. Telemundo</li><li>f. “Good Morning America”</li><li>g. CNN</li></ul></li><li>2. Radio<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. KFI</li><li>b. KNX</li></ul></li></ul>	<p>Media Relations Guide. Refer to Student Resource Files</p>
--	---

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>c. KPCC</li><li>d. NPR</li><li>3. Print<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. LA Times</li><li>b. Time Magazine</li><li>c. La Opinion</li></ul></li><li>4. Photographers<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Newsweek</li><li>b. Getty Images</li></ul></li><li>5. The Future of Media<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. LNS – Local News Stations</li><li>b. Bloggers<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Patch.com</li></ul></li><li>c. Flash Media</li><li>d. TMZ<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) First to break the news of Michael Jackson’s death.</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>D. What the News Media needs<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Role of News Media<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. 420.10 ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA. A well-informed public is essential to the existence of a democratic nation. To effectively exercise his or her franchise, a citizen must be aware of current events and the state of government. A free press serves the public by supplying needed information, by stimulating thought, and by providing a medium for expression. Crime, its results, and the efforts to combat it are all matters of continuing public concern. The Department is regularly involved in events at which members of the news media are properly present and performing their task of gathering information. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.10]</b></li></ul></li><li>2. Information<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Accurate</li><li>b. Detailed</li><li>c. Descriptive</li><li>d. Timely</li></ul></li><li>3. Sound Bites</li></ul></li></ul>	
---	--

**Event 9 – Critical Incident  
Session 20 – Media Relations  
LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. 15 seconds</li><li>b. “B” Roll</li><li>4. The Public’s Right to Know<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. 440.10 REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION. The public has an abiding interest in law enforcement and in the activities of the Department. The news media and members of the public frequently direct inquiries to the Department seeking information on a variety of subjects. While it is the aim of the Department to fulfill such requests, it is not always possible to do so. Whether to release information or to grant interviews will be determined according to the facts of each case. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/440.10]</b></li><li>b. The public gets most of its news from;<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Radio</li><li>2) Internet</li><li>3) Newspapers</li><li>4) Bloggers</li><li>5) Twitter</li><li>6) Magazines</li></ul></li><li>c. The media’s portrayal of the police is often the public’s reality</li><li>d. The public has a need to know</li></ul></li><li>5. Public perception<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Accurate</li><li>b. Inaccurate</li></ul></li><li>6. Public Right to Record Law<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. SB-411</li><li>b. Officers can stop the recording activity when it interferes with the investigation or presents an officer safety issue.</li><li>c. <b>LAPD Office of Operations Order-September 9, 2015-Notice 11.2: Rights of Person’s to Photograph and Videotape Officers in Public</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) “When police activity occurs in a public place, the public has a right to photograph and videotape police</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>	<p><b>Explain SB-411:</b> <i>This bill would provide that the fact that a person takes a photograph or makes an audio or video recording of a public officer or peace officer, while the officer is in a public place or the person taking the photograph or making the recording is in a place he or she has the right to be, is not, in and of itself, a violation of the above-mentioned provision, nor does it constitute reasonable suspicion to detain the person or probable cause to arrest the person.</i></p>
---	---



**Event 9 – Critical Incident  
Session 20 – Media Relations  
LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

purpose of abating any calamity enumerated in this section or any riot or other civil disturbance to any and all unauthorized persons pursuant to the conditions set forth in the section whether or not the field command post or other command post is located near to the actual calamity or riot or other civil disturbance.

- 3) Entering a Closed Area, 409.5 (c) P.C. – Any unauthorized person who willfully and knowingly enters an area closed pursuant to subdivision (a) or (b) and who willfully remains within the area after receiving notice to evacuate or leave shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.
  - a) Entering a closed area is a misdemeanor
- 4) Media Exception, 409.5 (d) P.C. – Nothing in this section shall prevent a duly authorized representative of any news service, newspaper, or radio or television station or network from entering the areas closed pursuant to this section.
  - a) The police have a duty to warn the media of hazards if they enter a closed area.
  - b) **420.70 NEWS REPORTERS ENTERING AN AREA CLOSED PURSUANT TO STATUTE.** According to State law, duly authorized representatives of any news service, newspaper, or radio or television station or network may enter any area closed because of a menace to the public health or safety. Authorization for such entry is based upon the possession of a temporary or permanent Department issued news media pass. The decision to

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

assume the risk of danger remains with the individual news reporter involved, and it is not the responsibility of officers to provide for the safety of those members of the news media who voluntarily choose to subject themselves to danger. **[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.70]**

- c) 420.85 NEWS MEDIA NOT EXEMPT FROM LAWS. A news reporter's primary responsibility is to report the news by obtaining information and photographs at news worthy incidents. His/her opportunity to do so is infrequently momentary at an emergency scene. An officer sharing these circumstances with a news reporter should not unnecessarily obstruct the news reporter in the performance of his/her duty; however, members of the news media are neither impliedly nor expressly exempt from any municipal, state, or federal statute. **[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.85]**
- d) Exception: News Reporters may enter a closed area as provided for in Section 1/420.70 of the Department Manual.

2. Media Identification

- a. Media should have a Media Credential from a local police agency
  - 1) LAPD
  - 2) LASD
  - 3) CHP
- b. Exceptions Made
  - 1) Contact your Public Information Officer (PIO) if Dispute
  - 2) 420.30 DEPARTMENT PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER. To foster cooperation and mutual respect

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

between the news media and the Department, the Commanding Officer, Media Relations and Community Affairs Group, is designated as the Department's Public Information Officer. His or her personal services are made available to authorized representatives of the news media to assist in solving problems of mutual concern to the press and the Department. Additionally, the Public Information Officer responds to serious police incidents to assist the news media in their function. **[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.30]**

- c. Business Cards from Outlet
- d. Criteria for Credentialing
  - 1) Professional vs. Hobby
    - a) Bloggers
    - b) Students
  - 2) Submit 6 samples of their work in the past 3 months
  - 3) Articulate Need
  - 4) Business License
  - 5) Live Scan – DOJ Background Check
  - 6) Criminal Arrests
- e. Media Card Verification
  - 1) 298.40 NEWS MEDIA IDENTIFICATION CARDS AT FIRE OR DISASTER. At the scene of a fire or other disaster, an employee shall permit holders of news media identification cards to pass through police and fire lines to obtain news or photographs. **[LAPD Manual Section 4/298.40]**
  - 2) 298.80 NEWS MEDIA IDENTIFICATION CARDS AT THE SCENE OF A CRIME. The senior officer assigned to the follow up investigation of a crime shall be responsible for determining the advisability of permitting members of

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<p>the news media access to the scene. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 4/298.80]</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>3) Photo of Valid News Media Identification Card</li><li>4) 420.60 NEWS MEDIA PASSES. To assure that the Department is communicating with an authorized news media representative at the scene of a police incident, and to assure the representative that he/she will not be unnecessarily obstructed in the pursuit of his/her functions, the Department issues and honors news media passes. The Board of Police Commissioners is authorized by City ordinance to issue news media credentials. Passes are issued to news reporters from newspapers, news services, news magazines, and radio and television stations which maintain regular news services in Los Angeles and which are legitimate current news disseminators. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.60]</b></li><li>5) Temporary news media passes may be issued for the duration of a police incident to legitimate news media representatives who have been specifically assigned to the incident by their employers. The possession of a news media pass issued by another law enforcement agency will be persuasive evidence that its possessor is a legitimate news media representative.</li></ol> <p>f. Media Viewing Areas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Things to consider;<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a) Staging</li><li>b) Can they see and hear?</li><li>c) Protecting our investigation</li></ol></li><li>2) 420.90 REQUESTING WITHHOLDING OF PUBLICATION. News reporters may photograph or</li></ol>	
--	--

**Event 9 – Critical Incident  
Session 20 – Media Relations  
LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

report anything they observe when legally present at an emergency scene. Where publication of such coverage would interfere with an official investigation or place a victim, suspect, or others in jeopardy, the withholding of publication is dependent upon a cooperative press, not upon censorship by the Department. Under such circumstances officers should advise the news reporters or their superiors of the possible consequences of publication; however, officers may not interfere with news reporter's activities if that performance remains within the confines of the law. **[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.90]**

- g. Tactical Considerations
  - 1) 420.75 ALLOWING NEWS REPORTERS TO ENTER AREA OF A SERIOUS POLICE INCIDENT OR CRIME SCENE. Police lines may be established to prevent persons from entering the area of a serious police incident or crime scene. Dependent upon the tactical situation and the likelihood of jeopardizing police operations, members of the news media may be allowed in such areas. Authorization for entry is normally dependent upon the possession of a permanent or temporary Department issued news media pass; however; if the Department is not issuing temporary passes or does not have the present capability of issuing temporary passes at the scene, and the opportunity of obtaining news coverage appears to be limited in duration, a news media pass issued by another law enforcement agency may be recognized. **[LAPD Manual**

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<p><b>Section 1/420.75]</b></p> <p>2) 420.80 WHERE A NEWS REPORTER IS NOT AUTHORIZED. While a news reporter may be permitted in a crime scene or a serious police incident, he/she does not have the authority to be within a crime scene or area which has been secured to preserve evidence or at any location where his/her presence jeopardizes police operations. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.80]</b></p> <p>3) Viewing police tactics, such as SWAT entries</p> <p>4) Bomb Squad tactics</p> <p>5) Officer safety</p> <p>6) Hostages</p> <p>7) Victim(s)/Witness(s)</p> <p>8) Family members</p> <p>h. Two Lines at Crime Scenes</p> <p>1) Media tape</p> <p>2) Public Tape</p> <p>F. Providing Information to the Media</p> <p>1. 440.40 RESPONSIBILITY OF OFFICERS TO SUPPLY INFORMATION. Frequently, due to public expectations and because of their accessibility, officers are called upon to supply information both related and unrelated to the law enforcement function. Officers should appropriately answer questions put to them or refer the person to the proper individual or agency for such answers. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/440.20]</b></p> <p>2. When a request is made for information about a police matter, officers should decide if they are in possession of sufficient facts and are qualified to respond, and whether the person making the request is a proper person to receive the information. Generally, officers should be open in their dealings with the public and, unless there is reason to the contrary, they should supply requested information. They should, however, be</p>	<p><b>Ask:</b> Can anyone give an example of an unusual spectacular event?</p>
--	--

**Event 9 – Critical Incident  
Session 20 – Media Relations  
LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<p>cautious to avoid representing as fact that which is their opinion.</p> <p>3. 420.40 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION. When an event being investigated is of such a spectacular or unusual nature as to stimulate general community interest, the news media will be notified. Normally, it is the responsibility of an Area or division commanding officer or the senior officer at the scene to make such notifications; however, when there is an event of major proportions, the Public Information Officer will assume responsibility for the release of information. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.20]</b></p> <p>4. 420.50 SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION. The scope and content of each release of information must be determined according to the facts of each situation. Generally, a description of the circumstances which is not legally privileged, and which will not prejudice the rights of suspects or interfere with an investigation will be made. Such determination is made by the Public Information Officer or by the senior officer at the scene after consultation with the investigating officer or other responsible authority. <b>[LAPD Manual Section 1/420.50]</b></p> <p>5. Public Disclosure of Crime and Arrest Reports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Information provided upon request</li><li>b. Govt. Code Section 6254 (f)</li><li>c. Unless Release would<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Endanger the investigation or,</li><li>2) A related investigation or,</li><li>3) Endanger the safety of a person involved</li></ul></li></ul> <p>6. Releasable Information (Arrest Reports 9-Lines)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Arrestees full name (Except Juveniles)</li><li>b. Area of residence and occupation</li></ul>	<p><b>Ask:</b> What information can an Officer release to the media?</p>
--	--

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>c. Physical description<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Age</li><li>2) Sex</li><li>3) Descent</li></ul></li><li>d. Time, date, location of arrest</li><li>e. Factual circumstances</li><li>f. Amount of bail and location the suspect is being held</li><li>g. All charges including warrants</li><li>h. Parole or probation holds</li><li>7. Releasable Information (Radio Calls/ Crime Reports)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Time, substance and location of complaint or call for assistance</li><li>b. Time and nature of response</li><li>c. Time, date, and location of occurrence of crime or incident</li><li>d. Time and date of report</li><li>e. Factual circumstances</li></ul></li><li>8. Non-Releasable Information<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Freedom of information Act<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Victims</li><li>2) Witnesses</li><li>3) Suspects</li><li>4) Arrestees</li></ul></li><li>b. Released Information should not;<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Impinge on a person's right to a fair trial</li><li>2) Seriously impede a criminal investigation</li><li>3) Imperil a human life, or</li><li>4) Seriously endanger the security of the people</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>9. Information Release Consideration<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Don't release<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Privileged information</li><li>2) Key issues in a case</li><li>3) Statements made by the suspect</li><li>4) Results of tests</li><li>5) Don't endanger your investigation</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>G. LAPD Policies and Procedures<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Notifying Media Relations and Newsworthy</li></ul></li></ul>	
---	--

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

**Events [OCOP 02-18-15 Notice 1.1]**

- a. LAPD Media Relations Section handles most requested interviews, including those related to ongoing issues and routine inquiries.
- b. If an issue or event has the potential to become newsworthy or controversial, Media Relations must be notified as soon as possible.
- c. Additionally, Command Staff input will be requested to determine the accuracy and consistency of messages for use with the media.
- d. High profile issues or major incidents, both positive and negative, require a proactive approach stance with media Relations involvement.
- e. Media issues tend to evolve quickly and therefore, Media Relations should be contacted immediately.
- f. Timely notification to Media Relations should be at the forefront of every incident commander's assessment of an incident or event, preplanned or otherwise, to preserve the image of this organization.
- g. We must be proactive and effectively communicate a clear, accurate, and consistent message to our public before we are forced into a media crisis.
- h. Timely notifications shall be made to Media Relations at (213)486-5910 or at [WWW.PRESS@lapd.lacity.org](mailto:WWW.PRESS@lapd.lacity.org). After hours, call Real-Time Analysis and Critical Response (RACR) Division at (213)484-6700 or [RACR@lapd.lacity.org](mailto:RACR@lapd.lacity.org).
- i. When in doubt call Media Relations Section, 213-486-5910, anytime.
- j. Provide each recruit officer with a copy of the Los Angeles Police Department Media Relations Handbook (2008)

**[Key Points]**

- The key to success with the media lies in communication
- When working with the media, do what is possible to facilitate their needs in accordance with Department policy.

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

**Learning Activity #1: Public Right to Record**

**Instructions:** Break up class into 2 groups and handout 1 Scenarios, 1 per group.

**Scenario #1:** Officer initiates a traffic stop, and a passenger in the rear seat begins recording the entire police contact on his cell phone.

**Decision Making:** How would you as an officer handle this scenario?

**Class Discussion:** Debrief the class actions as a group.

**Scenario # 2:** Officer initiates a night time traffic stop, and a passenger in the rear seat begins recording the entire police contact on his cell phone using a bright light to illuminate the police contact. The bright light causes the Officer's vision to be impaired.

**Decision Making:** How would you as an Officer handle this scenario?

**Class Discussion:** Debrief the Officer's actions as a group.

**Learning Activity #2**  
**Case Studies-Media Relations**

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

**Case Study # 1**

You are a P1 working West LA Division. You respond as back-up to a radio call of a possible explosive device outside the Federal Building on Wilshire Blvd. A possible bomb has been identified. The building is being evacuated and the bomb squad is en route. You're assigned to traffic control outside the perimeter. A news van parks near your location. The reporter and cameraman approach you and ask where the device is as they begin to enter the taped-off perimeter.

**Discussion Questions**

**Question:** Does the media have a right to enter the involved area?

**Answer:**

- No, the taped-off area is considered a crime scene.

**Question:** Once you have advised the involved media that they may not enter your crime scene what steps shall be taken?

**Answer:**

- Establish a "Media Area" with maximum access under the circumstance
- Assign a PIO (Public Information Officer) to provide timely and updated information to the media
- Consider "Pool "access at the incident.

**Question:** What information can you release to the media?

**Answer:**

- A possible device has been identified; the building is being evacuated; the bomb squad is en route.

**Case Study # 2**

You are a P1 working 77th Division. You and your training officer respond to the scene of an officer involved shooting at the intersection of Florence Ave and Denker Ave. Upon arrival, you

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

are advised that the officers have been transported to 77th Station and the suspect to the hospital for treatment of multiple gunshot wounds. Detectives from Force Investigation Division are on scene. A news reporter approaches you and begins to question you about what occurred.

**Question:** Does the media have a right to enter the involved area (Public Street)?

**Answer:**

- No, the taped-off area is considered a crime scene.

**Question:** Once you have advised the involved media that they may not enter your crime scene, what steps shall be taken?

**Answer:**

- Establish a “Media Area” with maximum access under the circumstances
- Assign a PIO (Public Information Officer) to provide timely and updated information to the media
- Consider “Pool “access at the incident.

**Question:** What information can you release to the media?

**Answer:**

- That an OIS had occurred
- Where the suspect and involved officers were transported to
- The basic information that precipitated the OIS

**Case Study # 3**

You are a P1 working North Hollywood Division. You and your Training Officer respond to an “Officer Needs Help” call. As you arrive to the scene, you are advised that the officers were rear-ended by a deuce (drunk driver). One of the officers is injured and is being treated by EMT’s. A news van with a reporter and cameraman respond to the scene. The injured officer tells you that he doesn’t want his picture taken. The cameraman begins filming.

**Question:** Does the media have a right to film the officer?

**Answer:**

- Yes. This is within their rights.

**Question:** Is there anything that officers can do to accommodate the officer’s wishes?

**Answer:**

- Attempt to appeal to the cameraman’s better nature

**Question:** What would you say to the cameraman?

**Answer:**

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

- “Hey, this officer is worried that his family will see him on the news before anyone has the chance to let them know what happened. Would you please not broadcast this?”
- If he still insists on filming, he’s legally permitted.

**Case Study # 4**

You are a P1 working Central Division. A large group of protesters are marching from Olvera Street to City Hall. As the protesters approach City Hall, a small number of them begin throwing rocks and bottles at the police. An unlawful assembly is declared. You observe a news van with a reporter and cameraman filming and interviewing the members of the crowd.

**Question:** Since an unlawful assembly has been declared, must the media leave?

**Answer:**

- Although the Department may be legally justified in ordering the press to leave, it would be better to find a safe area in which the press could assemble.

**Question:** Who should designate a safe place for the media area?

**Answer:**

- The Incident Commander

**Case Study # 5**

You are a P1 working Van Nuys Division. Due to a heavy rain, the Sepulveda Flood Basin is closed due to flooding. You and your Training Officer are assigned traffic control outside the flooded area. As you are directing traffic, you observe a news van stop by the intersection. A reporter and cameraman approach you and advise you they want to enter the flooded area.

**Question:** Does the media have the right to enter the flooded area?

**Answer:**

- Yes. The decision to enter is theirs.

**Question:** What should you tell them?

**Answer:**

- As per Department policy, the media should be warned of the potential danger.

**KEY POINTS:**

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

- The key to success with the media lies in communication.
- When working with the media do what is possible to facilitate their needs.
- In facilitating the needs of the media, you facilitate the needs of the Department.
- If we say nothing to the media, who will tell OUR story?

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

**420. NEWS MEDIA RELATIONS**

**420.10 ROLE OF THE NEWS MEDIA.** A well-informed public is essential to the existence of a democratic nation. To effectively exercise his or her franchise, a citizen must be aware of current events and the state of government. A free press serves the public by supplying needed information, by stimulating thought, and by providing a medium for expression. Crime, its results, and the efforts to combat it are all matters of continuing public concern. The Department is regularly involved in events at which members of the news media are properly present and performing their task of gathering information.

**420.20 ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT.** The Department actively seeks to establish a cooperative climate in which the news media may obtain information on matters of public interest in a manner which does not hamper police operations. However, certain information must be withheld from the news media in order to protect the constitutional rights of an accused, to avoid interfering with a Department investigation, or because it is legally privileged.

**420.30 DEPARTMENT PRESS RELATIONS OFFICER.** To foster cooperation and mutual respect between the news media and the Department, a member of the personal staff of the Chief of Police is designated as the Department's Public Information Officer. His or her personal services are made available to authorized representatives of the news media to assist in solving problems of mutual concern to the press and the Department. Additionally, the Public Information Officer responds to serious police incidents to assist the news media in their function.

**420.40 RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION.** When an event being investigated is of such a spectacular or unusual nature as to stimulate general community interest, the news media will be notified. Normally, it is the responsibility of an Area or division commanding officer or the senior officer at the scene to make such notifications; however, when there is an event of major proportions, the Public Information Officer will assume responsibility for the release of information.

**420.50 SCOPE AND CONTENT OF THE RELEASE OF INFORMATION.** The scope and content of each release of information must be determined according to the facts of each situation. Generally, a description of the circumstances which is not legally privileged and which will not prejudice the rights of suspects or interfere with an investigation will be made. Such determination is made by the Public Information Officer or by the senior officer at the scene after consultation with the investigating officer or other responsible authority.

**420.60 NEWS MEDIA PASSES.** To assure that the Department is communicating with an authorized news media representative at the scene of a police incident, and to assure the representative that he/she will not be unnecessarily obstructed in the pursuit of his/her functions, the Department issues and honors news media passes. The Board of Police Commissioners is authorized by City ordinance to issue news media credentials. Passes are issued to news reporters from newspapers, news services, news magazines, and radio and television stations which

**Event 9 – Critical Incident**  
**Session 20 – Media Relations**  
**LD 26- Unusual Occurrences**

maintain regular news services in Los Angeles and which are legitimate current news disseminators.

Temporary news media passes may be issued for the duration of a police incident to legitimate news media representatives who have been specifically assigned to the incident by their employers. The possession of a news media pass issued by another law enforcement agency will be persuasive evidence that its possessor is a legitimate news media representative.

**420.70 NEWS REPORTERS ENTERING AN AREA CLOSED PURSUANT TO STATUTE.** According to State law, duly authorized representatives of any news service, newspaper, or radio or television station or network may enter any area closed because of a menace to the public health or safety. Authorization for such entry is based upon the possession of a temporary or permanent Department-issued news media pass. The decision to assume the risk of danger remains with the individual news reporter involved, and it is not the responsibility of officers to provide for the safety of those members of the news media who voluntarily choose to subject themselves to danger.

**420.75 ALLOWING NEWS REPORTERS TO ENTER AREA OF A SERIOUS POLICE INCIDENT OR CRIME SCENE.** Police lines may be established to prevent persons from entering the area of a serious police incident or crime scene. Dependent upon the tactical situation and the likelihood of jeopardizing police operations, members of the news media may be allowed in such areas. Authorization for entry is normally dependent upon the possession of a permanent or temporary Department-issued news media pass; however, if the Department is not issuing temporary passes or does not have the present capability of issuing temporary passes at the scene, and the opportunity of obtaining news coverage appears to be limited in duration, a news media pass issued by another law enforcement agency may be recognized.

**420.80 WHERE A NEWS REPORTER IS NOT AUTHORIZED.** While a news reporter may be permitted in a crime scene or a serious police incident, he/she does not have the authority to be within a crime scene or area which has been secured to preserve evidence or at any location where his/her presence jeopardizes police operations.

**420.85 NEWS MEDIA NOT EXEMPT FROM LAWS.** A news reporter's primary responsibility is to report the news by obtaining information and photographs at news-worthy incidents. His/her opportunity to do so is infrequently momentary at an emergency scene. An officer sharing these circumstances with a news reporter should not unnecessarily obstruct the news reporter in the performance of his/her duty; however, members of the news media are neither impliedly nor expressly exempt from any municipal, state, or federal statute.

**Exception:** News Reporters may enter a closed area as provided for in Section 1/420.70 of the Department Manual.