

# LOW RISK/HIGH FREQUENCY

## HUDSON FIRE DEPARTMENT

Standard Operating Guidelines

**GUIDELINE NO: 100.20**

**SUBJECT: MEDIA INFORMATION AND  
OTHER RECORD RELEASES**

**APPROVAL:** Scott St. Martin, Fire Chief

Effective Date: 5-16-16

Revised Date: n/a

### PURPOSE

This guideline gives consideration to information that is released by the Hudson Fire Department relating to incident calls and other department related information. It is of utmost importance as to what information is released and when it is released.

### RESPONSIBILITY

1. All Chief and Company Officers have the responsibility to comply with and ensure that the personnel under their command are adequately trained, fully understand, and comply with this guideline.
2. All firefighters have the responsibility to learn and follow this guideline.

### GUIDELINE

A. Assisting news personnel in covering news stories at the scene of incidents.

1. Incidents. The Fire Chief, designee or assigned Public Information Officer is responsible for media release, usually in the form of a written press release, a conversation with local media, or a formal press briefing. No other department member shall talk with any media personnel (with regard to the details of any fire, accident, or incident the member responded to, pertaining to details involving the source or cause of the fire, accident, or incident, injuries sustained, possible criminal or civil charges, or any official investigation into the fire, accident, or incident) unless authorized by Fire Chief or designee.
2. Access of media representatives, including photographers. Scenes of fires/disasters/catastrophic events can be dangerous. In order to provide safety to media representatives, as well as the general public, safety guidelines may require the establishment of perimeter lines. Such perimeter lines shall NOT to be crossed by any non-emergency personnel unless directly approved by the Incident Commander.

B. Preparing and distributing agency news releases.

1. Written press releases may be prepared by the Fire Chief, designee or assigned Public Information Officer. The criteria for issuing a written press release is incident dependent. Incidents that cause significant damage, i.e. structure fire or other event that causes significant public interest, are just a few examples of when a press release may be issued.
2. The information released in the written press release is limited to the following:
  - a. Time and Location of incident.
  - b. Type and amount of equipment that responded.
  - c. Other agencies involved in response.

- d. Generic statement of any fire personnel or civilian injuries, similar to; “one civilian received minor injuries and was transported by Hudson EMS.”
- e. Owner of the property can be released if they are notified of the incident.
- f. Unless the cause of the incident is clearly determined, it should be listed as “under investigation.”
- g. If there is law enforcement involvement in the investigation of a fire, no release of any investigation information is permitted.
- h. A fire prevention message that is pertinent to the incident.

#### C. Multiple Agencies and Press Releases

- 1. The procedure for releasing information when other public service agencies are involved in a mutual effort shall remain fluid and at the discretion of the Fire Chief or his/her designee.
- 2. The agency having primary jurisdiction is responsible for releasing, or coordinating the release of information. “Primary jurisdiction” is defined as the agency with geographical jurisdiction over the event.

#### D. Open Records Requests

- 1. The Fire Chief is designated as the custodian of the fire department records.
- 2. All open records requests shall be in writing. No records shall be released without the authorization and review of the Fire Chief.
- 3. If a record release is approved, the records will be made available as soon as practically possible pursuant to Wisconsin’s Open Records Laws, and within 10 business days if possible.

**References:** Risk and frequency classification information - <http://firefighterclosecalls.com/sopsog.php>