

City of Medford EOP Functional Annexes

FA 1. Emergency Services

Appendix A-2 Guidelines for Release of Information to the Media

The following guidelines shall be used in evaluating and releasing information concerning the incident:

1. Accurate information will be provided to the media. Facts that can be confirmed should be released as soon as possible. If little information is available, the following statement should be issued:

“We are aware that an (incident/accident) involving (type of incident) occurred at approximately (time), in the vicinity of (general location). Emergency crews are responding, and we will have additional information available as we are able to confirm it. We will hold a briefing at (location), and will alert the media at least 1/2 hour prior to the briefing. At this time, the briefing is the only place where officials authorized to speak about the incident and confirmed information will be available. Thank you for your assistance.”

2. Emergency information dissemination should be restricted to approved, specific, and verified information concerning the incident and should include:

- a. Nature and extent of emergency occurrence.
- b. Impacted or potentially affected areas of the City.
- c. Advice on emergency safety procedures, if any.
- d. Activities being conducted by the City to combat the hazardous conditions or mitigate the effects.
- e. Procedures for reporting emergency conditions to the EOC.

3. Information concerning the incident should be consistent for all members of the media.

4. Information should be presented in an objective manner.

5. Rumor control is vital during emergency operations. Sensitive or critical information must be authorized and verified before release. Unconfirmed rumors or information from unauthorized sources may be responded to in the following manner:

“We will not confirm until we have been able to check out the information through authorized sources. Once we have confirmed information, we will release it to all members of the press at the same time.”

6. Information that media representatives often request includes:
 - a. Emergency: What is it?
 - b. Location: Where is it?
 - c. Time: When did it occur? How long will it last?
 - d. Fatalities: Are there any? How many?
 - e. Injuries: Are there any? How Many? What is the nature of the injuries?
 - f. Injured: Where are they being treated? Where can family members call to get information?
 - g. Involved agencies: What agencies responded? How many? What level of involvement do they have?

7. Do not release information that might hinder emergency response, prejudice the outcome of an investigation, or pose a further threat to public safety. Examples include:
 - a. Personal conjecture about the course of the emergency or the conduct of response.
 - b. Opinions about evidence, or a suspect or defendant's character, guilt, or innocence.
 - c. Contents of statements used in alibis, admissions, or confessions.
 - d. References to the results of various tests and examinations.
 - e. Statements that might jeopardize the testimony of witnesses.
 - f. Demeaning information/statements.
 - g. Information that might compromise the effectiveness of response and recovery.

8. In an incident involving fatalities, the names of the victims or the cause of death shall not be released without authorization from the District Attorney's and Medical Examiner's office.

9. Confidential information is not to be released. This includes home phone numbers of City personnel, volunteer emergency workers, and any unpublished fire stations and City telephone numbers.

10. Public information briefings, releases, interviews, and warnings shall be logged and tape-recorded. Copies shall become part of the final incident package.

11. Do not commit to firm briefing times unless it is certain these times can be kept.