



Virginia Beach Department of Emergency Medical Services



GENERAL DEPARTMENT ADMINISTRATION

MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

PURPOSE: To establish a policy that will facilitate the free flow of information between the Department, the news media, and the general public.

GOAL: The Virginia Beach Emergency Medical Services Department is committed to, and recognizes the right of the news media and general public to be fully and accurately informed on all matters concerning public safety.

ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT:

The Media Relations Office shall coordinate the release of all general information concerning department policies and operations as well as specific statements on issues that might arise concerning the Department of Emergency Medical Services. Such information shall be conveyed to the media in a timely fashion. The Media Relations Officer will strive to facilitate interviews with sources directly involved in the topic of interest.

PROCEDURE:

Field Responses by Media Relations Office: The Media Relations Officer is encouraged, whenever possible, to respond to the scene of significant incidents, or to coordinate the release of information as otherwise specified in this policy. If the Media Relations Officer is unavailable, the highest-ranking supervisor of the lead agency at the incident shall assume the responsibility for release of information.

The Media Relations Officer shall be notified of the following:

1. All serious accidents involving Emergency Medical Services vehicles.
2. Vehicle accidents involving complex entrapments, fatalities, or unusual circumstances.
3. Working marine rescue/recovery operations.

4. All drownings, including near-drowning incidents on oceanfront beaches which require ambulance transportation.
5. All incidents involving more than five patients.
6. Natural or man-made disasters resulting in loss of life/or extensive property damage.
7. Any aircraft, railroad, or mass transit accident.
8. Fires requiring multiple alarms or working fires at which patients are transported to the hospital.
9. Any incident that results in serious injury to a member of the Department.
10. Any incident or event in which the incident commander deems necessary.

Information That Cannot Be Released:

1. Patient medical history.
2. Home address or telephone number of any member of the department.
3. Identity of any department member involved in a serious incident, such as a shooting, automobile accident, etc., until the investigating officer in charge has approved such release.

Direct Releases and Press Conferences: Any member preparing a media release shall immediately deliver a copy of that release to the Media Relations Office.

Freedom of Information Requests: When the Department receives a Freedom of Information Act request, it shall be time-stamped to record the date of receipt. When a verbal request is presented, the receiver shall document the request in writing and time stamp the documentation. A copy of either type of request shall be forwarded on the day of receipt to the Office of the City Attorney.

Use of Department Facilities: Normally the Department will not grant permission for its equipment or the interior of its facilities to be used for television, motion pictures, or other entertainment productions. However, when appropriate for recording interviews, new documentaries, news releases or events of an unusual nature, the Department may allow media representatives to use their equipment inside facilities under its supervision.

Internal Investigation: Upon approval by the Emergency Medical Services Chief, the Media Relations Officer shall coordinate the release of any information with the Support Services Deputy Chief.

Televised or In-Person Speaking Engagements: Any member who accepts a speaking engagement representing the Department of Emergency Medical Services and not an individual rescue squad shall notify the Media Relations Office, by memo at least seven (7) days prior to the event, or by phone and follow-up memo if unable to comply with this requirement.

Building Tours: The Department, upon request, may conduct tours of EMS facilities. The scope of such tours will depend upon security requirements and personnel availability. The Media Relations Office shall process requests for tours.

Multi-Agency Operations: In the event the Virginia Beach Emergency Medical Services Department becomes involved in a mutual effort with other agencies, the agency having primary jurisdiction shall be responsible for releasing or coordinating the release of information.

No member of the Virginia Beach Emergency Medical Services Department shall release information from another agency without first obtaining permission from the agency, and only the Media Relations Office shall conduct any such release.

ORDERED:



1/3/2017

EMS Chief

Date