



OFFICE OF THE COUNTY SHERIFF

Montgomery County, Maryland

Darren M. Popkin, Sheriff



GENERAL ORDERS/PERSONEL PROCEDURES

<u>Subject:</u>	<u>Number:</u>	<u>Effective Date:</u>
Media Relations	2.33	07/15/16

Purpose: This directive establishes procedures and provides guidance to employees regarding the release of information to the media.

Contents:

- I. Personnel Involved in the Public Information Function
- II. Procedures for Release of Media Information
- III. Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Social Media Presence
- IV. Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Official Facebook Page

I. Personnel Involved in the Public Information Function

- A. The Sheriff or their designee will be the sole employee authorized to release information on behalf of the Sheriff's Office. During a serious event or critical incident, it is better to have one unified message being delivered from the same person throughout the entirety of the event.
- B. The Sheriff is the point of contact for all media requests directed to the Sheriff's Office.
- C. The Sheriff will designate a deputy to act as the administrator for the Sheriff's Office social media sites as well as the Sheriff's Office Website.

II. Procedures for Release of Media Information

- A. All information released on behalf of the Sheriff's Office must be approved by the Sheriff or their designee prior to being released to the public.
 - (1) The Sheriff or their designee, is responsible for:
 - (a) Preparing and distributing media releases.
 - (b) Arranging and assisting with media conferences.
 - (c) Coordinating and authorizing the release of information about victims, witnesses, and suspects.
 - (d) Coordinating and authorizing the release of information concerning confidential agency investigations and operations.

- (2) When the release of information involves other public safety agencies, the Sheriff or their designee will coordinate the release of information by contacting the involved agency's Chief Executive Officer or person in charge of public affairs to review the final version of information to be released.
- B. No information will be released which would potentially hinder any ongoing investigations being conducted by the Sheriff's Office or any other law enforcement agency.
 - C. The Sheriff will designate an area in or near the Circuit Court to be used for press conferences.

III. Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Social Media Presence

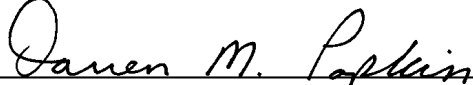
- A. The Sheriff's Office maintains an official Facebook Page. The purpose of this page is to:
 - (1) Publicize the good work and successes of Sheriff's Office employees on a daily basis.
 - (2) Connect with the public on a large scale platform that will allow for increased exposure of the content that is posted.
 - (3) Alert the general public to important news and information relating to the Sheriff's Office and Montgomery County, Maryland.
 - (4) Communicate essential information to the public in the event of a disaster or critical situation.
- B. The Sheriff's Office maintains an official website with the purpose of providing to the public:
 - (1) Information related to essential services provided by the Office of the Sheriff.
 - (2) Contact information for the Sheriff's Office.
 - (3) Information related to Sheriff's Office employment opportunities.

IV. Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Official Facebook Page

- A. The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Facebook Page is an outlet to showcase the good work that Sheriff's Office employees perform daily within the community. The Facebook Page will highlight and recognize the good work being done and in turn, help the Sheriff's Office better interact with and serve the community at large.

- B. The Sheriff will assign an employee to be the administrator for the Sheriff's Office official Facebook Page. This employee will be responsible for:
- (1) Posting all content to the Sheriff's Office Facebook Page as directed by the Sheriff or their designee.
 - (2) Ensuring that any content posted is accurate and up to date.
 - (3) Notifying the Section Supervisor of content that has been posted which relates to activities within their section.
 - (4) Monitoring content or statements posted by the public to the Facebook Page and ensuring those comments are not offensive or vulgar.
 - (5) Staying up to date on trends and case law related to social media usage by a law enforcement agency.
 - (6) Establishing and maintaining professional relationships with community groups and other law enforcement agency's social media representatives/liaisons.
- C. Employees are encouraged to contact the Facebook Page administrator with suggestions regarding content that should be posted on the Official Facebook Page for the Sheriff's Office.
- D. Typical content that is posted on the Official Sheriff's Office Facebook Page will consist of, but is not limited to, award ceremonies, training academy graduations, exceptional work by employees, events involving Sheriff's Office personnel, news related to trials or any other event taking place in or around the Circuit Court, public service announcements, crime prevention tips, local weather, etc.

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