97-004 Press Interviews

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

PRESS INTERVIEWS

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Field Operations Directive is to provide guidelines for personnel assigned to the Field Operations Regions who may be interviewed by members of the news media.

OVERVIEW

Section 3-01/080.00 of the Manual of Policy and Procedures establishes the Department's press policy. Our policy specifies that the release of information to the media will be "decentralized" and that, "Employees shall facilitate the work of accredited members of the press by providing them with accurate information in accordance with Department regulations." This directive goes further and creates policy for press interview situations.

PRESS INTERVIEWS

When responding to questions from the media, personnel shall limit their responses to the specific subject being discussed. They shall not provide information beyond the scope of the question or the subject being discussed. For example, if a reporter is asking about a drug arrest, the person being interviewed shall not volunteer that, "Drugs are a major problem in this neighborhood."

Personnel should be aware that with incidents involving Headquarters Detective Units, e.g., Homicide, Juvenile Investigations Bureau, Arson/Explosives, details released prematurely could hinder the investigation. Personnel should limit their statements to their actions, such as, "I responded to a shots fired call and discovered a dead body in the street." Only minimal information should be released to the media pending the authorization of the handling detectives.

Deputy personnel shall not give their opinions, speculate, or make "educated guesses" when speaking with the media. Personnel may cite policy **only when they are one hundred percent certain of the exact wording of the policy**. It is permissible to read our policy if a Department Manual is available. Personnel shall not interpret policy.

Deputy personnel shall refer reporters who request the following types of information to their supervisor or to Sheriff's Information Bureau:

- Interpretation of Department policy

- Comments or information on issues beyond the scope of the specific situation
- Comments or information on trends, statistics, etc., involving the Department, the station or unit, or any contract city

Personnel are reminded that any valid press credential, including those issued by the employing agency, shall allow access to scenes of disasters, riots, and civil disobedience. It is not necessary for representatives of the press to have a press pass issued by our Department. Members of the press should be warned of the dangers, but will **not** be escorted into the area by Department personnel. Possession of a press pass or press identification **does not** permit entry into a crime scene or into the immediate vicinity of a special weapons operation.