95-008 Disclosure of Crime Information

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

DISCLOSURE OF CRIME INFORMATION

Policy

In an effort to minimize any perceptions of lucrative profits from certain crimes, it will be the policy of this Department to withhold, from any media or public inquiries, information concerning the amount of money and/or monetary value of property taken in the commission of any bank robbery. The only exception will be the disclosure of such information to another law enforcement agency, or, when in the opinion of the lead detective such disclosure would benefit the progress of the investigation. All other guidelines concerning the disclosure of information are outlined in the Department Manual section 3-09/090.00, Release of Official Information.

Guidelines

The following guidelines should be considered when issuing general statements:

- **Designate a public information officer to be on the scene to coordinate responses with reporters or release information through Sheriff's Information Bureau**. This is particularly important in cases involving intense media interest such as takeover robberies, or if disclosure of certain information will be made.

- **Describe bank robbery as a "dumb" crime, having a high apprehension rate, severe sentences and small takes**. The public perception is that criminals get away with hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash. To deter other criminals, this general fact should be emphasized regardless of the actual amount taken.

- **Publicize offers of rewards and informant hotlines**. This is particularly helpful when the case involves injuries to employees and customers. The media should be very willing to publicize hotlines such as "We Tip" (1-800-78-CRIME).

- **Work with media on descriptions of subjects and getaway vehicles**. Television and newspaper coverage of photographs and descriptions are an invaluable resource to publicize information.

- **Avoid divulging the amount of money taken. Doing so may encourage more robberies**. On the other hand, acknowledging that small amounts were taken could underscore the ridiculousness of the crime.

- **Decline comments regarding suspects method of operation, bait money, tracking devices,**

video surveillance cameras, or other devices utilized by the institution. The effectiveness of such devices is diminished as knowledge of their use is elevated.

- **Restrict the media from the inside of the bank during the initial investigation**.
- **Restrict media access to victims and potential witnesses during the initial investigation**. This will not only offer a sense of protection to bank victims, but reduce the stress they already experience.
- **Bank robbery reports should not be posted on station press boards**.