

5-06/000.35 - News Media

The media shall be permitted free access to the affected disaster area after being advised of the existing dangers and when such entry will not interfere with the duties of law enforcement or fire personnel. Deputy personnel shall not decline to affect the rescue of media personnel. Deputy personnel are not required to escort media into affected areas. These points must be made clear to media representatives prior to entry into affected areas. The incident commander has the authority to close a disaster area and to bar the public; however, all properly identified news media are exempt from this restriction.

Access to restricted areas shall be limited to duly authorized representatives of the news media. A duly authorized representative of the media may be identified with the following:

- A valid media identification card (press pass) issued by any law enforcement agency, government agency, or fire department within the state;
- Employee identification card/badge for a news service;
- Press credentials or identification card issued by a press trade group (e.g., Los Angeles Press Club, National Press Photographers Association);
- Professional business card for a news service/news organization;
- Letter of assignment for freelancer on news organization letterhead; and
- Credentials for journalism majors and school news publications or websites at an accredited secondary school, community college, college or university.

Note - Photo identification may be required to confirm the possessor is the person named on a credential.

Press exemptions apply to disasters, riots, and civil disobedience situations only. Media representatives are not afforded any special status at crime scenes or areas cordoned off during Special Weapons Team operations.

Additional protocols and procedures for duly authorized media access to command posts during civil disorder events are enumerated in MPP Section 5-06/000.36.

Members of the Sheriff's Information Bureau (SIB) staff will be available at both the Field Command Post and the Emergency Operations Center to coordinate press releases, thereby allowing the incident commander and his staff to work without undue interference. SIB personnel will also be available to assist tactical unit commanders and the news media.

The first deputies to arrive at a crime scene or location of an incident shall inform the attending press representatives of the basic facts of which they have knowledge. Deputies shall not advance any theories, suspicions, or speculations in the matter. The ranking field officer or their designee at the location shall act as a press liaison officer in the absence of a representative from SIB.

When the case or incident is one in which a detective division assignment is involved, the ranking detective division officer, or their designee at the scene, shall take over as press liaison officer in the absence of a representative from SIB.

Posed pictures shall be avoided as well as all forms of manufactured sensationalism. Statements by field personnel about the status of the operation shall not be made as a rapid change of circumstances may make any observations obsolete. Inquiries should be referred to SIB representatives. This does not prohibit statements by field personnel regarding specific incidents in which they were personally involved.

Under the Incident Command System (ICS), SIB staff will be part of the incident commander's command staff, and will be referred to as Public Information Officers (PIO).
