

NORTH BERRIEN FIRE RESCUE DEPARTMENT

Category: Emergency Operations

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Title: Media Relations

OPERATIONAL POLICIES

Policy: 09-515

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PURPOSE

This SOG will provide the Incident Command and dispatch with a guideline to work effectively with the media. This guideline will help understand the important relationship North Berrien Fire Rescue Department maintains with the media.

GUIDELINES

Incidents that have the potential of drawing media attention will require North Berrien Fire Rescue Department to address the needs of the media as early as possible. The Incident Command needs to consider establishing a Public Information Officer (PIO) as soon as possible. A Chief Officer or other appropriate person in dealing with the media must be assigned to maintain a positive working relationship with the media. When assigning the task of PIO, it is imperative for the PIO to know their role.

The PIO has a responsibility to make sure that the information provided to the media is accurate. To gather information the PIO should consult with the Incident Command about specific details. It is best if they wear a uniform and/or turnout gear with a helmet to effectively look like a North Berrien Fire Rescue Department representative. It is important to establish a safe location to meet with the media that is away from the command post but still close enough to provide good video footage.

Make sure that you prepare a brief overview of the incident to assist you when giving a report to the media. Make sure to state only facts and follow the Do's and Don'ts listed below. For prolonged incidents set up briefings at regular time intervals. Make sure you are sensitive to the newspaper deadlines.

DO...

- Be cooperative and honest with the media.
- Give some information, even if tentative ASAP.
- Offer to get more information you don't have.
- Refer the press to other agencies for information. (police, hospitals, etc.)

Give details about:

- Number and type of units responding (include mutual aid)
- Personnel
- Response time and how long it took to control the situation
- Description of incident on arrival (hazmat, fire, rescue)
- Actions of initial units (rescue, salvage, extinguishment)
- Lives saved (humans & animals)
- Injuries and deaths (only if next of kin has been notified)
- Points about fire protection systems, and/or alarms that operated, etc.
- Use 30 second sound bites to convey your messages
- Note points about relevant fire prevention and other safety tips
- Give a damage estimate as minimal, moderate or heavy (avoid using \$ amount)
- Arrange for cameras to get close to the scene
- Use the media (radio & TV) to convey emergency information to the public about evacuations, roads closed, etc.

