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# SOUTHERN PARK COUNTY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

Guffey, Colorado • Established 1987

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## POLICY NO. 200-2.14

### RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

*Southern Park County Fire Protection District • Series 200 — Governance & Administration*

<b>Policy Number:</b>	<b>200-2.14</b>	<b>Document Number:</b>	20260408_ADMIN_200-2.14_ReleaseOfInformationMediaRelations_DRAFT-v0.4
<b>Effective Date:</b>	May 12, 2026	<b>Adopted:</b>	May 12, 2026
<b>Reviewed / Revised:</b>	—	<b>Next Review:</b>	Annual — Q1 each year
<b>Approved By:</b>	Board of Directors, SPCFPD	<b>Classification:</b>	<b>PUBLIC POLICY DOCUMENT</b>
<b>Supersedes:</b>	Legacy Policy #030 (Release of Information Policy, December 6, 2012) — in full. This policy expands and modernizes Policy #030 to reflect current law, HIPAA obligations, digital communications, and the District’s current governance structure.		
<b>Cross-References:</b>	BAM v1.1 (§§ 9.1.1, 9.1.2) • Policy 200-2.04 (Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure § 6.e) • Policy 200-2.09 (Social Media Policy) • Policy 200-2.10 (Community Engagement § 3) • Policy 200-2.11 (Records Retention) • Policy 200-2.12 (CORA Compliance) • Policy 300-3.13 (Progressive Discipline — pending) • Policy 900-9.01 (Public Information Release — pending) • Policy 900-9.02 (Media Relations Procedure — pending) • HIPAA 45 C.F.R. Parts 160, 164 • C.R.S. § 24-6-402 (Colorado Open Meetings Law) • NIMS ICS-702A (Public Information)		

## 1. PURPOSE

Timely, accurate, and authorized public communication is essential to public safety, community trust, and the District’s legal and ethical obligations as a public agency. This policy establishes the framework governing all release of information about the District — to the media, to the public, in written communications, and during and after emergency incidents. It supersedes Legacy Policy #030 (Release of Information Policy, December 6, 2012) in full and expands it to reflect current law, digital communications, and the District’s current governance structure.



Relationship to BAM and other policies. BAM v1.1 § 9.1.1 establishes the Board Chair as authorized spokesperson for governance matters and the District Chief for operational matters. BAM v1.1 § 9.1.2 requires that media inquiries be routed to the appropriate spokesperson. Policy 200-2.10 § 3 establishes the full authorized spokesperson framework and four-step media inquiry routing procedure. Policy 200-2.09 governs social media use by all personnel. Policy 200-2.04 § 6.e governs media inquiries involving confidential information. This policy governs the mechanics of information release — what can be said, by whom, in what format, and with what documentation. In any conflict with BAM §§ 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 as applied to Director governance conduct, the BAM controls.

## 2. SCOPE

This policy applies to all persons associated with the District who communicate, or may be asked to communicate, information about the District to any external audience — including all Directors, the District Chief and paid staff, active volunteers and reserves, auxiliary members, and contractors acting in the District’s name. It applies to oral statements, written communications, press releases, media interviews, social media posts on official accounts, and any other form of public communication about District activities, incidents, decisions, or personnel.

## 3. DEFINITIONS

**"Media" or "Press."** Any person or organization gathering information for potential publication or broadcast, including print newspapers, online news outlets, radio, television, podcasts, community newsletters, and social media accounts operated for journalistic purposes. The definition is intentionally broad; when uncertain whether a person is acting as media, treat the inquiry as a media inquiry.

**"Press Release."** A written official statement prepared and issued by the District for distribution to media or the public. Press releases are public records and require authorization per § 5.

**"Public Information Officer (PIO)."** A District member designated by the District Chief to provide authorized public information at or in connection with an emergency incident, under the authority of the Incident Commander. The PIO role is an ICS function. The PIO does not have authority to speak on governance matters or non-incident operational matters.

**"Incident Information."** Factual information about an emergency incident to which the District has responded, including incident type, location, operational status, and resource deployment. Incident information does not include patient information, investigation findings, personnel disciplinary matters, or information that is confidential under Policy 200-2.04. See also "Incident Media," defined in Policy 200-2.09 § 3, which governs photographs, video, and audio recordings from incident scenes and applies concurrently with this policy when the same incident gives rise to both a media inquiry and social media activity.

**"Media Contact Log."** The District’s official record of all media inquiries received, the date and nature of each inquiry, and the response provided. The District Chief is responsible for maintaining the log per § 8.

## 4. AUTHORIZED SPOKESPERSON SUMMARY

The following table summarizes who may release information in each category. The full authorized spokesperson framework, including media inquiry routing procedures, is established in Policy 200-2.10 § 3, which governs in any conflict with this section. BAM v1.1 §§ 9.1.1 and 9.1.2 control for Director governance conduct.

Subject	Authorized Person	Scope	Limitations
Board governance, policy, and Board decisions	Board Chair (or designee)	Official Board positions; policy changes; Board resolutions; governance matters	Must reflect actual Board position; no pre-decisional disclosure
Operational matters: response, apparatus, training, personnel	District Chief (or designee)	Day-to-day operations; response activities; non-confidential personnel matters	No patient info; no ongoing investigation details; no personnel disciplinary matters



Emergency incident scene information	<b>Incident Commander (IC) or designated PIO</b>	Factual incident information per § 6 of this policy	IC authority during active incident only; post-incident reverts to Chief
Routine activity and community education	<b>District Chief (or designee)</b>	Training activities; public education programs; community events	Chief approval required; must not compromise safety or ongoing operations
All other inquiries	<b>None — route to Board Chair or District Chief</b>	No substantive response without authorization	Personnel shall acknowledge receipt only and route per § 4.d of Policy 200-2.10

**No unauthorized releases.** No person other than an authorized spokesperson shall provide substantive information to media or the public about the District, its operations, its incidents, or its personnel. Saying "I'll make sure the right person gets back to you" is always appropriate. Providing substantive information without authorization is not, regardless of how accurate or well-intentioned the information may be.

## 5. PRESS RELEASES AND WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

- a. Authorization required. No press release or written official public statement may be issued in the name of the District without prior approval of the Board Chair (for governance content) or the District Chief (for operational content). Authorization shall be documented. In urgent situations, verbal authorization from the Board Chair or District Chief is sufficient, with written documentation to follow within 24 hours.
- b. Content standards. All press releases and official written public statements shall: (i) be factually accurate and limited to verified information; (ii) not include speculation, preliminary estimates, or information that may change; (iii) not identify patients, victims, or their medical condition; (iv) not comment on pending litigation, pending personnel matters, or executive session content; and (v) be reviewed for compliance with Policy 200-2.04 (Confidentiality) before issuance.
- c. Format and distribution. Press releases shall be formatted using the District's approved letterhead and template. Upon authorization, press releases shall be distributed by the District Chief to: (i) the District website ([www.guffeyfire.net](http://www.guffeyfire.net)) in the public news section; (ii) media outlets who have previously covered the District or who have made the relevant inquiry; and (iii) official District social media accounts per Policy 200-2.09 § 7. Press releases shall be filed as public records per Policy 200-2.11 using the PUB category code per Policy 100-1.05 § 5.
- d. Corrections and retractions. If a press release or official statement contains a material inaccuracy, the District Chief shall issue a correction as promptly as practicable after the error is identified. Corrections shall be distributed through the same channels as the original statement. The original statement and correction shall both be retained in the District's official records.

## 6. INCIDENT INFORMATION RELEASE

Emergency incidents attract public and media attention. The following rules govern what information may be released, by whom, and when. The goal is to provide the public with timely, accurate safety information while protecting patient privacy, investigation integrity, and personnel safety.

- a. At-scene authority. During an active incident, the Incident Commander (IC) is the final authority on all matters at the scene, including public information. The IC may designate a PIO to handle media at the scene. The PIO operates under the IC's authority and within the limits of this policy. The District Chief may also be present and may coordinate with the IC on public information; in the event of any conflict at the scene, the IC's determination on safety and operational matters governs.
- b. What may be released at scene. The IC or PIO may release factual incident information as set out in the table below. When in doubt whether a specific piece of information is releasable, the default is to not release it until the District Chief or Board Chair confirms.



✓ Information That MAY Be Released	✗ Information That SHALL NOT Be Released
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type and general nature of incident (e.g., structure fire, medical call, vehicle accident)</li> <li>General location (street or area — not specific address if occupied structure with victims)</li> <li>Number and type of units responding</li> <li>General operational status (e.g., fire under control, scene cleared)</li> <li>Requests for public assistance or road closures if operationally appropriate</li> <li>Post-incident: whether investigation is ongoing (without details)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identity of patients, victims, or injured persons</li> <li>Medical condition, diagnosis, or treatment of any person (HIPAA absolute prohibition)</li> <li>Cause or origin of fire or incident while under investigation</li> <li>Identity of deceased persons (death notifications by Park County Coroner/Sheriff only)</li> <li>Identity of District personnel involved in any disciplinary or personnel matter</li> <li>Dollar estimates of property damage before formal assessment</li> <li>Tactical or operational details that could compromise ongoing operations or safety</li> <li>Contents of confidential District records or communications</li> </ul>

c. Post-incident release. After an incident is cleared, the District Chief is the authorized spokesperson for all post-incident information. Preliminary incident information (e.g., a brief public summary) may be released within 24 hours of clearance with the District Chief’s approval. Detailed after-action information, investigation findings, or cause and origin determinations shall not be released until the relevant investigation is complete and the District Chief or Board Chair has approved the release. Investigation findings involving potential criminal conduct shall be coordinated with Park County Sheriff before public release.

d. Media at incident scenes. Media personnel may be permitted at or near incident scenes at the IC’s discretion, provided their presence does not: (i) interfere with operations; (ii) compromise scene safety; (iii) identify patients or victims; or (iv) enter areas restricted for operational or investigative reasons. The IC may establish a media staging area and direct media to that location. Media who refuse to comply with IC direction may be excluded from the scene.

**HIPAA is absolute.** No District personnel — including the IC and PIO — may release any information identifying a patient or describing a patient’s medical condition, treatment, or outcome under any circumstances. This prohibition applies regardless of whether the information appears to be publicly known, whether family members are present, or whether the media already has partial information. Direct all patient information inquiries to the attending medical facility. HIPAA violations carry personal civil and criminal liability.

## 7. DEATH AND SERIOUS INJURY NOTIFICATIONS

a. Patient or civilian death. Death notifications for patients or civilians are the exclusive responsibility of the Park County Coroner and Park County Sheriff, consistent with Legacy Policy #030 and Colorado law. No District personnel shall make a death notification to family members or release the identity of a deceased person to the public or media. Direct all death notification inquiries to the Park County Coroner’s Office.

b. Line of Duty Death (LODD). In the event of a Line of Duty Death of a District member, the following sequence governs: (i) The District Chief shall immediately notify the Board Chair. (ii) No public statement shall be made until the member’s family has been notified through the appropriate next-of-kin notification process, coordinated with the Park County Sheriff as needed. (iii) The Board Chair shall coordinate with the family regarding the timing and content of the public statement honoring the member. (iv) The Board Chair shall make the official District statement. (v) No other District personnel shall make public statements about the LODD until the Board Chair has made the official statement and provided guidance. LODD procedures shall be coordinated with applicable state and federal LODD notification requirements and with the District’s LODD benefits process.

c. Serious injury to District personnel. When a District member sustains a serious injury in the line of duty: (i) the District Chief shall notify the member’s family or emergency contact before any public



statement is made; (ii) no public identification of the injured member shall occur until the family has been notified and has consented to identification; and (iii) no medical information about the member's condition or treatment shall be released without the member's express written consent or the consent of their authorized representative.

## 8. PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER (PIO)

a. **Designation.** The District Chief may designate one or more District members to serve as Public Information Officers. The PIO designation is an operational role; a designated PIO does not acquire authority over governance or Board matters by virtue of the designation. The District Chief shall document all PIO designations and report current designations to the Board annually.

b. **Qualifications.** A designated PIO shall have completed, at minimum, FEMA IS-702.A (NIMS: Public Information) or an equivalent course recognized by the Colorado Division of Fire Prevention and Control. The District Chief shall ensure that PIO qualification records are maintained in the member's training file.

c. **Scope of PIO authority.** A PIO may release incident information as authorized by the IC and within the limits of § 6 of this policy. A PIO may not: (i) make statements about Board governance or policy matters; (ii) release information that the IC has not cleared; (iii) identify patients, victims, or their medical condition; or (iv) commit the District to any position beyond the authorized factual incident summary. The PIO role ends when the incident is cleared; post-incident communications revert to the District Chief.

d. **Absence of a designated PIO.** If no PIO has been designated or the designated PIO is unavailable, the IC may personally handle public information at the scene, or may direct that no statement be made until the District Chief is available. The IC shall not delegate public information functions to a member who has not been trained on this policy and § 6 requirements.

## 9. MEDIA CONTACT LOG AND RECORDS

The District Chief shall maintain a Media Contact Log as an official District record. The log shall record: (i) the date and time of each media inquiry; (ii) the name of the reporter or media outlet; (iii) the nature of the inquiry; (iv) the name of the District member who received the inquiry; (v) the name of the authorized spokesperson who responded; and (vi) a brief description of the response provided or the referral made.

All press releases, official written statements, and media interview records are public records subject to CORA. They shall be retained per the schedule in Policy 200-2.11 and filed using the PUB category code per Policy 100-1.05 § 5. The Media Contact Log shall be retained for a minimum of three (3) years.

## 10. RELATIONSHIP TO 900-SERIES POLICIES

This policy establishes the governance framework for information release and media relations. Two 900-series policies will provide the operational detail when drafted and adopted:

**Policy 900-9.01 (Public Information Release Policy — PENDING).** Will establish the procedures for routine public information postings: the annual transparency notice (C.R.S. § 32-1-809), public meeting notices, budget posting, and other mandatory public disclosures. Policy 200-2.14 governs discretionary media releases; 900-9.01 will govern mandatory postings.

**Policy 900-9.02 (Media Relations Procedure — NEW).** Will establish day-to-day media relationship management: maintaining a media contact list, proactive press release schedule, media kit content, and procedures for common inquiry types. Policy 200-2.14 provides the authorization framework and legal limits; 900-9.02 will provide the operational playbook.

## 11. TRAINING

a. **All personnel.** All Directors, paid staff, and active volunteers shall receive awareness training on this policy — specifically §§ 4 and 6 — as part of initial onboarding and the annual ethics training cycle per Policy 200-2.01 § 9. Training shall emphasize: the spokesperson framework; the media inquiry routing procedure; the incident information releasable/non-releasable table; and the HIPAA absolute prohibition.



b. Designated PIOs. Any member designated as PIO shall complete the qualification requirements in § 8.b before acting as PIO at any incident. The District Chief shall document PIO qualification in the member’s training file and shall ensure qualification is current (FEMA IS-702.A has no expiration, but the District Chief may require periodic refresher training consistent with current NIMS guidance).

**12. ENFORCEMENT**

Unauthorized release of information in violation of this policy is subject to enforcement under Policy 200-2.01 § 7 and the progressive discipline procedures in Policy 300-3.13 (pending). Unauthorized releases involving patient protected health information may also carry personal civil and criminal liability under HIPAA independent of any District disciplinary action.

**13. ANNUAL REVIEW AND AMENDMENT**

This policy shall be reviewed in the Q1 annual review cycle per Policy 100-1.06. The District Chief shall evaluate whether changes in Colorado law, HIPAA regulations, NIMS guidance, or District operational experience require updates, and shall present recommended amendments to the Board before each review. Amendment requires a majority Board vote per Policy 100-1.06 § 5.

**14. SEVERABILITY**

If any provision of this policy is held invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

**PASSAGE AND ADOPTION.**

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Board of Directors of the Southern Park County Fire Protection District at a duly noticed public meeting, by the following vote:

Director	AYE	NAY	ABSTAIN
Sean English (Board Chair)	AYE		
Mike Brandt (Secretary/Treasurer)	AYE		
Mike Parrish	AYE		
Mike Smith			
Jennifer Taylor	AYE		



## ATTESTATION.

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned duly authorized officers hereby attest to the adoption of this policy.

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**Sean English**

Board Chair — Board of Directors, SPCFPD

**Date:** May 12, 2026

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**Mike Brandt**

Secretary/Treasurer — Board of Directors, SPCFPD

**Date:** May 12, 2026

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**Mike Parrish**

Board Member — Board of Directors, SPCFPD

**Date:** May 12, 2026

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**Mike Smith**

Board Member — Board of Directors, SPCFPD

**Date:**

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**Jennifer Taylor**

Board Member — Board of Directors, SPCFPD

**Date:** May 12, 2026

## CERTIFICATION.

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I, Mike Brandt, Secretary/Treasurer of the Board of Directors of the Southern Park County Fire Protection District, Park County, Colorado, hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of Policy 200-2.14 duly adopted by the Board of Directors at a duly noticed public meeting, at which a quorum was present and acting throughout.

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**Mike Brandt**

Secretary/Treasurer — Southern Park County Fire Protection District

**Date:** May 12, 2026



Document Revision History

Document: 20260408\_ADMIN\_200-2.14\_ReleaseOfInformationMediaRelations\_DRAFT-v0.4 Policy: 200-2.14 — RELEASE OF INFORMATION AND MEDIA RELATIONS POLICY

Table with 4 columns: Ver., Date, Author, Changes / Status. Rows include v0.1 through v1.0, detailing revisions such as 'Initial adoption', 'Two amendments per policy review analysis', and 'Formally adopted at regular board meeting'.

This policy shall be interpreted consistently with: Legacy Policy #030 (Release of Information Policy, December 6, 2012 — superseded); BAM v0.8 (§§ 9.1.1, 9.1.2 — Official Board Communications); Policy 200-2.04 (Confidentiality and Non-Disclosure § 6.e); Policy 200-2.09 (Social Media Policy); Policy 200-2.10 (Community Engagement and Public Education § 3); Policy 200-2.11 (Records Retention Schedule); Policy 200-2.12 (CORA Compliance Procedure); Policy 300-3.13 (Progressive Discipline — pending); Policy 900-9.01 (Public Information Release Policy — pending); Policy 900-9.02 (Media Relations Procedure — pending); HIPAA 45 C.F.R. Parts 160 and 164; C.R.S. § 24-6-402 (Colorado Open Meetings Law); FEMA IS-702.A (NIMS: Public Information); NIMS ICS-702A.

— END OF POLICY 200-2.14 —