


<b>SUBJECT INTERACTION WITH MEDIA ORGANIZATIONS</b>	<b>POLICY NUMBER 8.09</b>	
<b>POLICY MAINTENANCE ADMINISTRATOR:</b> Director, Office of Communications		
<b>PURPOSE/SCOPE:</b> To establish guidelines for receiving and responding to requests for information made to the department by a media organization.		

**I. AUTHORITY**

Article I, Section 24, Florida Constitution, Access to public records and meetings  
 Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, Public Records

**II. RELATED POLICIES** (<http://hsmvsafetynet/hsmvpolicies/Pages/PolicyIndex.aspx>)

- MP 3.06, Disciplinary Process
- MP 3.08, Ethics and Personal Responsibility
- MP 8.05, Web Content Management
- MP 8.08, Social Media Management
- MP 9.03, Providing Records to the Public
- Florida Highway Patrol Policy 13.01, Reports, Records and Department Information
- Florida Highway Patrol Policy 13.04, Public Records Requests
- Florida Highway Patrol Policy 15.01, Media Relations

**III. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Ad Hoc – Not routinely or regularly performed; as needed or required.
- B. Freelance – Working on a contract or ad hoc basis for various companies, as opposed to working as an employee for one company. For the purposes of this policy, freelance applies to reporters, journalists, or other individuals composing articles or stories to be disseminated personally or through the media to the general public.
- C. GovQA – The department’s public records management system managed and overseen through the Office of General Counsel.
- D. Media Organization (the Media) – An entity engaged in the dissemination of information to the general public through a newspaper, magazine, other publication, radio, television, or other medium of mass communication. For the

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purposes of this policy, this includes internet publications, websites, webpages, news sites including news aggregators, blogs, and all forms of social media.

- E. Media Representative – Any person identified as a representative of a media organization or identified as a freelance representative for a media organization. If a member is in doubt whether an individual is a media representative, the member must immediately refer the individual to the Office of Communications.
- F. Media Request – Request for department-related information made by the media or a media representative.
- G. Off-the-Record – Response to a media request not made as an official or attributable statement of the department that is not authorized to be used in a published or broadcasted work.
- H. On Background – Information provided in response to a media request that is not attributed to the source, but can be used in a published or broadcasted work.
- I. Social Media – Category of internet-based resources that integrate user-generated content and user participation. This includes social networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn), microblogging sites (e.g., Twitter, Nixle), photo and video sharing sites (e.g., Flickr, YouTube), blogs, and news sites including news aggregators (e.g., Digg, Reddit).

#### **IV. POLICY**

The Office of Communications working in conjunction with the Florida Highway Patrol Public Affairs Officers and the Bureau of Records within the Division of Motorist Services, when applicable, will promptly respond to media requests, including public record requests, and will maintain a positive working relationship with the media and media representatives.

Members must not identify or represent themselves as spokespersons for the department or imply that they are communicating on behalf of the department, unless their official job responsibilities include these activities or a specific communication is authorized. Members that violate this policy may be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

#### **V. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. A member must not discuss department matters with the media or a media representative unless:
  - 1. His or her official job responsibilities include this activity.

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2. The member is a sworn member of the Florida Highway Patrol who is authorized to communicate with the media or media representatives as provided in FHP Policy 15.01, Media Relations.
  3. The member is authorized to make a specific communication by the Executive Director (or designee) and/or the Director of the Office of Communications.
- B. A member must take the following steps if he or she receives a media request, (other than a public records request):
1. Immediately refer all media requests for information (except for public record requests), whether made by phone call, email, text, face-to-face, or any other form of contact, to the Office of Communications by providing the requestor with the Media Call Line phone number at (850) 617-3102. This includes requests for “off-the-record” or “on background” statements and personal interviews with the member.
  2. Before ending the conversation with a media representative making a media request, the member must obtain the representative’s name, contact information, subject of the request, and the name of his or her media organization. The member provides this information to the Office of Communications as quickly as possible and will notify his or her chain of command that the media request has occurred.
- C. If a media representative claims that he or she has been authorized to speak directly with a member, the member **must** verify this with the Office of Communications **prior to** any discussion with the media representative.
- D. Should the need arise for a member to provide a response on behalf of the department, the Office of Communications will assist the member in preparation of this response.
- E. Upon receiving a public records request from the media or from a person identifying himself or herself as a media representative, members must submit the request to the Office of Communications through the department’s public records management system (GovQA). The Office of Communications will coordinate with the appropriate records custodian(s) to timely produce the requested records that are not confidential or exempt from public disclosure in compliance with Management Policy 9.03, Providing Records to the Public, FHP Policy 13.01, Reports, Records, and Department Information, and FHP Policy 13.04, Public Records Requests.