

Records Release and Security

809.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this section is to establish a comprehensive reference and procedure for the maintenance and release of Department reports and records in accordance with the Public Records Act (RCW 42.56, et seq.).

809.2 DEFINITIONS

Privacy Violation (right of privacy, right to privacy, personal privacy) - An invasion or violation of privacy occurs only if disclosure of information about the person would be highly offensive to a reasonable person, and is not of legitimate concern to the public. The rights to privacy in certain public records do not create any right of privacy beyond those rights that are specified by law as express exemptions from the public's right to inspect, examine, or copy public records (RCW 42.56.050).

Public Record - Includes any writing containing information relating to the conduct of government or the performance of any governmental or proprietary function prepared, owned, used, or retained by any state or local agency regardless of physical form or characteristics (RCW 42.56.010(2)).

Writing - Means handwriting, typewriting, printing, photostating, photographing, and every other means of recording any form of communication or representation, including, but not limited to, letters, words, pictures, sounds, or symbols, or combination thereof, and all papers, maps, magnetic or paper tapes, photographic films and prints, motion picture, film and video recordings, magnetic or punched cards, discs, drums, diskettes, sound recordings, and other documents including existing data compilations from which information may be obtained or translated (RCW 42.56.010(3)).

809.3 PUBLIC RECORDS OFFICER

The Professional Standards Unit (PSU) Lieutenant is designated as the Vancouver Police Department's Public Records Officer and will serve as the point of contact for members of the public when requesting disclosure of public records and will oversee the agency's compliance with the public records disclosure requirements.

The PSU Lieutenant will post his/her name, role as the Public Records Officer, and contact information in the facility conspicuously visible to the public, and on the Department Internet site, and upon appropriate publications so as to provide easy access to members of the public for directing requests for disclosure of public records (RCW 42.56.580).

The Public Records Officer shall complete a training program as required by RCW 42.56.152 within 90 days of assuming responsibilities for public records and complete refresher training as required (RCW 42.56.152).

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809.4 PUBLIC REQUESTS FOR RECORDS

The Public Records Act provides that public records created by a public agency shall be subject to inspection and copying pursuant to request, except pursuant to exemptions set forth in the Act or otherwise established by statute (RCW 42.56.070(1)).

The Public Records Officer shall maintain business hours for record inspection or copying shall be posted on the Department's website and made known by other means designed to provide the public with notice (RCW 42.56.090).

The Public Records Officer shall also establish, maintain and make available for public inspection and copying a statement of the actual per page cost or other costs, if any, that it charges for providing photocopies of public records and a statement of the factors and manner used to determine the actual per page cost or other costs, if any (RCW 42.56.070(7) and (8)).

Public requests for records of this Department shall be processed as follows (RCW 42.56.070):

809.4.1 PROCESSING OF REQUESTS

Any member of the public, including the media and elected officials, may access unrestricted records of this Department by submitting a request for each record sought and paying any associated fees. The processing of requests is subject to the following limitations:

- (a) The employee processing the request shall determine if the requested record is available and/or subject to any exemption from disclosure. Processing of such requests shall be in accordance with this policy and RCW 42.56.520.
- (b) The Department shall not be required to create records that do not otherwise exist in order to accommodate any request under the Public Records Act.

809.4.2 PROMPT RESPONSE REQUIRED

Responses to requests for public records shall be made promptly. Within five business days of receiving a public record request, the Department must respond by either (RCW 42.56.520):

- (a) Providing the record.
- (b) Acknowledging receipt of the request and providing a reasonable estimate of the time required to respond to the request.
- (c) Denying the public record request.
- (d) Providing an Internet address and link on the agency's web site to the specific records requested, except that if the requester notifies the agency that he/she cannot access the records through the Internet, then the agency must provide copies of the record or allow the requester to view copies using an agency computer.

Additional time required to respond to a request may be based upon the need to clarify the intent of the request, to locate and assemble the information requested, to notify third persons or agencies affected by the request, or to determine whether any of the information requested is exempt and that a denial should be made as to all or part of the request. In acknowledging receipt of a public

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record request that is unclear, a request to clarify what information the requestor is seeking may be made. If the requestor fails to clarify the request, the Department need not respond to it.

Denials of requests must be accompanied by a written statement of the specific reasons for denial. The Public Records Officer will establish mechanisms for the most prompt possible review of decisions denying inspection.

Requests that are denied are subject to judicial review and the burden of proof is on the Department to show that the records requested are exempt or prohibited in whole or part by statute (RCW 42.56.660).

809.5 REPORT RELEASE RESTRICTIONS

Absent a valid court order or other statutory authority, records and/or unrestricted portions of such records of this Department shall be made public subject to the following restrictions:

809.5.1 GENERAL CASE AND CRIME REPORTS

Examples of release restrictions include (RCW 42.56.240):

- (a) **Intelligence and investigative records** - Specific intelligence information and specific investigative records, the nondisclosure of which is essential to effective law enforcement or for the protection of any person's right to privacy. Information involving confidential informants, intelligence information, information that would endanger the safety of any person involved or information that would endanger the successful completion of the investigation or a related investigation shall not be made public.
- (b) **Victim and witness information** - Information revealing the identity of persons who are witnesses to or victims of crime or who file complaints, if at the time a complaint is filed the complainant, victim or witness indicated a desire for disclosure or nondisclosure.
- (c) **Sex offenses** - Investigative reports pertaining to sex offenses under RCW 9A.44 et seq., or sexually violent offenses as defined in RCW 71.09.020, which have been transferred to the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs for permanent electronic retention and retrieval, pursuant to RCW 40.14.070(2)(b).
- (d) **License applications** - Copies of license applications, including concealed pistol license applications or information on the applications may only be released to law enforcement or corrections agencies under RCW 9.41.070.
- (e) **Child sexual assault victims** - Information revealing the identity of child victims of sexual assault who are under age 18. Identifying information means the child victim's name, address, location, photograph, and in cases in which the child victim is a relative or stepchild of the alleged perpetrator, identification of the relationship between the child and the alleged perpetrator.
- (f) **Personal information** - Personal information in files maintained for employees, to the extent that disclosure would violate their right to privacy. This includes credit card

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numbers, debit card numbers, electronic check numbers, card expiration dates, or bank or other financial account numbers, except when disclosure is expressly required by or governed by other law (RCW 42.56.230).

- (g) **Alarm System Program/Vacation Crime Watch Program Participants** - Personal identifying information collected by the Department for participation in an alarm system program and/or vacation crime watch program.

809.5.2 ARREST REPORTS

Arrest reports shall not be disseminated pursuant to the Criminal Records Privacy Act except to those agencies and under those circumstances necessary for a purpose in the administration of criminal justice as governed by RCW 10.97 et seq.

A person who is the subject of the record who requests information must comply with requirements of RCW 10.97.080.

In addition to the restrictions stated above, all requests from criminal defendants and their authorized representatives (including attorneys) shall be referred to the County Prosecutor, City Attorney or the courts.

Local criminal history information including, but not limited to, arrest history and disposition, fingerprints and booking photos shall only be subject to release to those agencies and individuals set forth in the Protected Information Policy.

809.5.3 TRAFFIC COLLISION REPORTS

Traffic collision reports (and related supplemental reports) are for official use only and may only be released without redaction pursuant to (RCW 46.52.080) to the following:

- The Washington State Patrol
- Department of Motor Vehicles
- Other Law Enforcement Agencies
- As authorized by law or valid court order

Upon request, parties having proper interest or involvement in the specific reported collision shall receive all of the factual data submitted in the report with the exception of the reports signed by the drivers involved in the accident. Such parties include the following (RCW 46.52.083):

- Involved drivers
- Legal guardians of the drivers
- Parent of a minor driver
- Injured parties
- Owners of damaged property
- Authorized attorney or insurance carrier

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Requests for traffic collision reports from individuals or entities other than those listed above are entitled to receive reports in redacted format.

809.5.4 PERSONNEL RECORDS

The following employment and licensing information is exempt from public inspection and copying (RCW 42.56.250):

- (a) Test questions, scoring keys and other examination data used to administer a license, employment or academic examination.
- (b) All applications for public employment, including the names of applicants, resumes, and other related materials submitted with respect to an applicant.
- (c) The residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses, Social Security numbers, driver license numbers, identicard numbers and emergency contact information of employees or volunteers of a public agency, and the names, dates of birth, residential addresses, residential telephone numbers, personal wireless telephone numbers, personal electronic mail addresses, Social Security numbers and emergency contact information of dependents of employees or volunteers of a public agency that are held in personnel records, public employment related records, or volunteer rosters, or are included in any mailing list of employees or volunteers of any public agency.
- (d) Information that identifies a person who, while a Department employee:
 - 1. Seeks advice, under an informal process established by the employing agency, in order to ascertain his/her rights in connection with a possible unfair practice under RCW 49.60 et seq. against the person.
 - 2. Requests his/her identity or any identifying information not be disclosed.
- (e) Investigative records compiled while conducting an active and ongoing investigation of a possible unfair practice under RCW 49.60 et seq. or of a possible violation of other federal, state or local laws prohibiting discrimination in employment.
- (f) Photographs and month and year of birth in the personnel files of employees and workers of criminal justice agencies. The news media, as defined in RCW 5.68.010(5), shall have access to the photographs and full date of birth.
 - 1. News media does not include any person or organization of persons in the custody of a criminal justice agency.
 - 2. Any such request by the media for the date of birth of an employee should be forwarded to the Administration Supervisor and the affected employee should be promptly advised of the request.
 - 3. A court may issue an injunction, at the request of the Department or the employee, if it finds that such examination would clearly not be in the public

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interest and would substantially and irreparably damage the employee or would substantially and irreparably damage vital government functions.

809.6 OTHER RECORDS

This Department maintains the right to refuse to disclose or release any other record when it would appear that the public's interest in accessing such record is outweighed by the need for non-disclosure.

Any record which was created exclusively in anticipation of potential litigation involving this Department shall not be subject to public disclosure.

Any other record not addressed in this policy shall not be subject to release where such record is exempted or prohibited from disclosure pursuant to state or federal law, including, but not limited to:

- (a) Drafts, Notes, Recommendations, Memorandums: Preliminary drafts, notes, recommendations, and intra-agency memorandums in which opinions are expressed or policies formulated or recommended are exempt under this chapter, except that a specific record is not exempt when publicly cited by an agency in connection with any agency action (RCW 42.56.280).
- (b) Department Party to Controversy: Records that are relevant to a controversy to which the Department is a party but which records would not be available to another party under the rules of pretrial discovery for causes pending in the superior courts (RCW 42.56.290).
- (c) Security: Those portions of records assembled, prepared, or maintained to prevent, mitigate, or respond to criminal terrorist acts, which are acts that significantly disrupt the conduct of government or of the general civilian population of the state or the United States and that manifest an extreme indifference to human life, the public disclosure of which would have a substantial likelihood of threatening public safety, consisting of (RCW 42.56.420):
 1. Specific and unique vulnerability assessments or specific and unique response or deployment plans, including compiled underlying data collected in preparation of or essential to the assessments, or to the response or deployment plans.
 2. Records not subject to public disclosure under federal law that are shared by federal or international agencies, and information prepared from national security briefings provided to state or local government officials related to domestic preparedness for acts of terrorism.
- (d) Those portions of records containing specific and unique vulnerability assessments or specific and unique emergency and escape response plans at a city, county, or state adult or juvenile correctional facility, the public disclosure of which would have a substantial likelihood of threatening the security of a city, county, or state adult or juvenile correctional facility or any individual's safety, including:

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1. Information compiled by school districts or schools in the development of their comprehensive safe school plans under RCW 28A.320.125, to the extent that they identify specific vulnerabilities of school districts and each individual school.
2. Information regarding the infrastructure and security of computer and telecommunications networks, consisting of security passwords, security access codes and programs, access codes for secure software applications, security and service recovery plans, security risk assessments, and security test results to the extent that they identify specific system vulnerabilities and other information that may increase the risk to the confidentiality, integrity or availability of department security, information technology infrastructure or assets.
3. The system security and emergency preparedness plan required under RCW 35.21.228, 35A.21.300, 36.01.210, 36.57.120, 36.57A.170, and 81.112.180.

809.6.1 PERSONAL IDENTIFYING INFORMATION

Employees shall not access, use or disclose personal identifying information, including an individual's photograph, social security number, driver identification number, name, address, telephone number and the individual's medical or disability information, which is contained in any driver license record, motor vehicle record or any department record except as authorized by the Department and only when such use or disclosure is permitted or required by law to carry out a legitimate law enforcement purpose (18 USC § 2721 and 18 USC § 2722).

809.7 SUBPOENA DUCES TECUM

Any Subpoena Duces Tecum (SDT) should be promptly provided to a supervisor for review and processing. While a Subpoena Duces Tecum may ultimately be subject to compliance, it is not an order from the Court that will automatically require the release of the requested information.

All questions regarding compliance with any Subpoena Duces Tecum should be promptly referred to legal counsel for the Department so that a timely response can be prepared.

809.8 RELEASED RECORDS TO BE STAMPED

Each page of any record released pursuant to a Public Records Act request or Subpoena Duces Tecum shall be stamped in red ink with a departmental stamp identifying the individual to whom the record was released.