# General Order

## Houston Police Department

| ISSUE DATE: | NO. |
|---|---|
| January 18, 2022 | 800-03 |

**REFERENCE:** This newly created General Order supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars, Directives, and General Orders

**SUBJECT: CRITICAL INCIDENT VIDEO PUBLIC RELEASE**

## POLICY

It is the policy of the department to maintain transparency by publicly releasing video that is captured by the department related to officer-involved shooting and officer-involved civilian death incidents. The department shall make timely and consistent public releases of body worn camera (BWC) footage, unless otherwise prohibited by law.

This General Order applies to all employees.

## DEFINITIONS

***Core Footage.*** Sections of video footage that depict the actual critical incident and any other salient events leading up to the critical incident or thereafter.

***Critical Incident.*** For the purposes of this General Order, an officer-involved shooting or officer-involved civilian death.

***Investigating Unit.*** For the purposes of this General Order, the unit or division investigating the critical incident. For most incidents involving department personnel, this will be the Special Investigations Unit of the Homicide Division.

***Officer-Involved Civilian Death.*** For the purposes of this General Order, the death of a detained or arrested individual in the custody of the department, a fatal crash in which an officer was involved, or a death of a previously detained or arrested individual immediately following the detention or arrest.

***Officer-Involved Shooting.*** For the purposes of this General Order, an incident where an officer discharged his or her weapon in the performance of his or her duties causing injury or death to any person.

***Prosecuting Authority.*** For the purposes of this General Order, the federal, state, or local authority investigating any critical incident for potential criminal charges or presentation to a grand jury.

## 1 TIMELINE FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

At the direction of the Chief of Police and within 30 days of a *critical incident,* the Office of Community Affairs shall publicly release the *core footage* of the *critical incident.* The *investigating unit* shall confirm that the involved officer(s), injured citizen(s), and/or the immediate family members of any deceased officer(s) or citizen(s) involved are given the opportunity to view the footage before the public release.

The *investigating unit* shall notify the *prosecuting authority* at least seven days prior to the department releasing the *core footage* of the *critical incident* to the public. If pressing circumstances require a shorter time period for release, the *investigating unit* shall notify the *prosecuting authority* as soon as practicable prior to release.

## 2 GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

The Houston Police Department will make all public releases of *core footage* of *critical incidents* in compliance with Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code (Texas Public Information Act) and all other applicable federal, state, and local laws. This includes, but is not limited to:

a. Concealing the identity of juvenile victims and suspects.

b. Protecting the identity of victims of sex crimes and domestic violence.

c. Blurring explicit or graphic content.

d. Protecting the life and/or safety of any person depicted in the video, including undercover officers and confidential sources.

e. Withholding any video captured in a private space or other place where the person depicted in the video has a reasonable expectation of privacy, unless that person or the authorized representative of a deceased person gives written consent.

At times, the department will be prohibited from releasing video as a matter of law.

The Office of Community Affairs shall make the public release on a public-facing website capable of video playback (e.g., YouTube). The Office of Community Affairs shall include an appropriate warning label regarding explicit or graphic content at the beginning of all *core footage*.

In addition to the full public release of *core footage* of *critical incidents*, the Office of Community Affairs may release a summary video for any *critical incident* to provide context, explain policy, and/or bring attention to critical details.

**Troy Finner**
**Chief of Police**