

# Boise Police Department

## Media Guide



The purpose of this guide is to guide reporters to resources available through the Boise Police Department.

The Boise Police Department is a major source of news in the Boise community.

Like the news media, the Boise Police Department operates 24/7, 52 weeks a year.

And like the news media, we serve the citizens of this community, in part, through collecting and sharing important information.

It is the philosophy of the Boise Police department to respond to media inquiries as quickly, completely and accurately as possible. This media policy is only part of the department's general philosophy to operate in an open, cooperative partnership with the community.

The release of information from the BPD to the media will be in the spirit of the department's media policy and in accordance with Idaho Code. This booklet is a reference guide only, and not intended to cover every possible situation.

This guide will help you know:

- Who to call for information
- When information is available
- When information may *not* be available
- How to obtain supporting or background information, like crime stats or trends
- What experts are available from the BPD on a variety of law enforcement, public safety and other topics

## Who to Call?



**Weekdays, major crimes or officer involved critical incidents:**  
your media contact is:

**Lynn Hightower**  
BPD PIO, Communications Director

**Desk: 570-6180**

**Cell: 761-2106**

The BPD Communications Director handles media relations for the department. The Communications Director is authorized to act as a spokesperson for the Department.

**Daily Arrest Info:** Daily arrest reports on felony cases are released Monday – Friday by the Boise PD Public Information Unit. This info is sent via e-mail and posted on [www.boisepolice.org](http://www.boisepolice.org). The Boise Police PIO office, unfortunately is NOT staffed 24/7. Information on arrests made over the weekend will be reported the next Monday.

The Boise Police Department also keeps an active video, photo and MP3 audio file. For assistance with these files, please call Chuck McClure, desk: 570-6181, or cell: 573-8017.

Nights, weekend or holidays, your best media contact for BREAKING NEWS is:



**Watch Commander**

**Call non-emergency dispatch**

**377-6790**

**\*\*\*A note about what the Watch Commander can give you:** The Watch Commander is able to provide basic info on **breaking** crimes, or crimes that occur on his or her shift. If you call a Watch Commander *immediately* after a report goes out over the radio, he or she will likely have no more info than you do. It may be at least 30 minutes after a call that details are available for release.

Watch Commanders are in the patrol division and *not* briefed on cases that involve detectives or ongoing investigations (different divisions – different jobs). If you'd like a weekend or evening follow up on an ongoing investigation, **please plan ahead** and get the info from the Communications Director during weekday business hours.

## Boise Police Website:

[www.boisepolice.org](http://www.boisepolice.org)



The Boise Police website has all the info you need on recent news and crime events, department organization, and the duties of different divisions and units. That information is not duplicated in this media guide.

Please bookmark [www.boisepolice.org](http://www.boisepolice.org) and turn to it regularly to acquaint yourself with the department and stay updated on current news items.

**On a big, breaking story, [www.boisepolice.org](http://www.boisepolice.org) is your source for constantly updated information.**

### **The BPD website includes:**

- **News Releases** - archived for the past month
- **Crime Stats** - recent and historical trends, and regional comparisons
- **Current Event Information** - times, places, details of events BPD or it's officers are involved in
- **Department Organization** - Organizational chart, department mission, etc.
- **Department by Divisions** - information on each division and unit, from Patrol to the Special Operations Unit (SWAT) to School Resource Officers, etc.
- **Multi-Media** - informational videos on department activities and divisions.
- **Online Police Services** – Graffiti and Abandon Vehicle reports, Speakers Requests, Crime Tips, etc. Anytime you can direct readers, viewers, or listeners to our website – great!

News is always updated on  
[www.boisepolice.org](http://www.boisepolice.org).



## Crimes and Arrests:

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### What Information is available?

According to Idaho Code 9-335:

- Type or nature of an event or crime
- Location, date, time, damages, general description of incident\*
- Name, sex, age of person arrested
- Time, place\* of arrest
- Place of suspects detention. Amount of bond is available from the jail.
- Names of Officers involved in critical incidents will be released as soon as possible
- Names of deceased victims, following notification of next of kin are available through the Ada County Coroner's Office: 287-5556
- Auto accident stats are available from the Idaho Office of Traffic and Highway Safety: 334-4467



\* If the location of arrest/crime may identify victims, this information may not be immediately available.

### What Information **may** be Available

- Idaho law allows that names of suspects 14 or over charged with an actual crime may be released. It is the policy of BPD to release those names only with the approval of the Chief. Names of juveniles charged with status crimes, such as curfew or smoking violations, will not be released.
- Specific cause of death, if officially determined by the coroner
- Very general description of injuries sustained as viewed by the officers (as opposed to specific medical conditions).
- Mug Shots may be released through BPD when available. Your main source for mugs is [www.adaweb.org](http://www.adaweb.org), or the media relations representative from the Ada County Sheriff's Office.

## What Information is **not** Available?

The following information is protected by law under Idaho Code 9-335:

- Identity or address of victims.
- Identity or address of witnesses.
- Identity of juvenile suspects under age 14.
- Medical Conditions unless permission is specifically given by the victim or the victim's family (HIPAA).
- Results of any investigative procedure, such as line ups, polygraphs tests, ballistics tests, etc.
- Information which, if prematurely released, may interfere with an investigation or apprehension of a suspect, such as the nature of leads, specifics of an "MO", details of the crime known only to the perpetrator or police, information that may cause the suspect to flee or avoid arrest.
- Evidence that may adversely affect a court proceeding.
- Status of persons turned over to the custody of Health & Welfare, such as mental holds or child custody situations.

*A word about mental holds and child custody situations.*



Police Officers routinely deal with people who have diagnosed or suspected mental illness. This is a medical condition protected under the medical records provision of the public records act. The department may only be able to refer you to the Department of Health & Welfare, however, they too are restricted in providing information due to patient's privacy rights.

Child Protection matters are also protected by law. Children taken into protective custody for whatever reason are provided protection of their identities and status under state and federal statutes.





## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

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### **Will there be special perimeter set up for Media at crime scenes?**

Generally – no. If an area is safe for the media it must also be safe for the public. However in some cases, media may be allowed in a restricted area for better access.

The Department asks media cooperation in working with officers at a crime scene before the perimeter is set.

### **When does a suspect become a suspect?**

When an arrest warrant is issued. Prior to that, their name may be released as a request to locate a “person of interest wanted for questioning”.

### **Can I get updates on major cases on the weekend? What about crime stats?**

Please plan ahead if you want to do a weekend update on a major, ongoing case. The weekend Watch Commander handles issues of the day and generally isn’t able to speak to major cases involving detectives. The Communications Director may also not be available for a weekend update if nothing is new on a major case.

The folks in the Crime Analysis Unit also work weekdays. If you need crime statistics for a weekend story, please plan ahead and get the info during the week.

### **Why Can’t the Department release medical conditions?**

HIPAA, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 provides people with privacy regarding their medical conditions.

Except for general descriptions of injuries sustained at a crime or accident scene, as pertinent to the crime or accident that occurred, the Boise Police Department is unable to provide media with specific medical conditions or exact types of injuries. Victim or family approval is necessary for the public release of this information, which is often unattainable during the time police are involved in an incident.

In exceptional cases, victims or their families may chose to work through the department’s Victim-Witness Coordinators to release medical information. Most of the time, however, specific medical conditions and injuries will not be available through BPD.

### **Why do I have to go to the County Jail for mug shots?**

Ada County is the legal custodian of these records. The county posts arrests daily on their website. Occasionally a mug shot will be released by the Boise Police Department as a courtesy. Generally, mugs come from the jail.

### **When does BPD request the Media’s help with a Missing Person case?**

When officers have a true concern for the person’s safety. This would include foul play, small children, Alzheimer’s patients, etc. BPD does not request media assistance for most missing person’s cases. Media assistance when requested to locate a missing person is greatly appreciated.

## **MORE FAQs:**



### **What about the identity of victims of traffic accidents?**

If the accident is a fatal, the name of the deceased victim will be released as soon as family is notified. The name generally comes from the Ada County Coroner.

Names of victims who are injured cannot be released under the privacy interest exclusion of Idaho Code 9-335 (1) (c), unless victims give consent. Names of others involved cannot be released unless they are cited or arrested.

### **What if I get a tip about an ongoing investigation?**

Good reporters get tips! Sometimes the tips have good information, sometimes, not so good.

If you ask about something officers are currently digging into, the department may or may not be able to confirm the investigation (see Idaho Code 9-335, BPD Media Guide, pg. 12).

Releasing news about an ongoing investigation prematurely could jeopardize the investigation, and possibly officer or public safety. Department response depends completely on preserving the integrity of the investigation.

### **What if I want an interview with the victim of a crime?**

The police department is prohibited from releasing names of crime victims and witnesses.

In some cases, the Communications Director can work with victim-witness coordinators if crime victims agree to a media interview. Requests like, "I need to find a fraud victim" is not something the police department can responsibly accommodate.

The department's professional and ethical responsibility is in preserving a victim's dignity, privacy, and resolving whatever crime has been committed against them.

### **Can the BPD help me with a story by providing background statistics beyond what I find on the website?**

Yes. BPD has a very active Crime Analysis Unit.

The only limitations are time and reporting methods. BPD can only provide information the department actually collects, and due to work load, it may take several days to track down very specific information.

### **What's the difference between IA (Internal Affairs) and the Ombudsman's Office?**

IA is a division of BPD. The Community Ombudsman is a separate office within Boise City government. Both investigate complaints against officers and critical incidents.

### **What's the difference between an Officer and a Deputy?**

If your story references an employee of a Police Department, that employee is referred to as an "officer", or by their rank in the department, as in Sgt., Lt., Capt., Deputy Chief, etc. If your story references an employee of a Sheriff's Department, that employee is called a "deputy", or called by their rank.



## **EVEN MORE FAQs:**

### **Can the Boise Police Department help me with questions about cases in other cities?**

Generally, no. BPD cannot provide information when another police agency is the primary responder or investigator

BPD has many mutual aide agreements and will respond to assist other agencies when requested. BPD often provides specialty services to other departments, like the Bomb Squad, K9's, or the SWAT team. BPD can provide information on how we assisted other departments, but will have to refer you to the primary agency for incident details.

### **How do I get a Ride-Along with an officer?**

Please call the Communications Director with your request, and we'll find an available officer for you to ride along with, as long as your request is media related.

All civilians, including media must submit an application and waiver prior to a ride-along. Please let the Communications Director know as soon as possible that you'd like a ride along so you have time to complete and submit the necessary waiver and application.

### **Can an officer invite a reporter onto private property to view a crime scene?**

No. Courts have ruled that it is an invasion of privacy for police officers to invite media onto private property without permission from the property owner.

Still, it is the policy the Boise Police Department to provide the closest access to media as possible, access that is safe, legal, and will not interfere with an investigation.

### **How do I find out information about a case that's gone to court?**

You would have to check with the appropriate court or with the prosecutors for that information, that includes hearing dates, camera requests, etc. The Boise Police Department deals with the investigative phase of a case, then, for public information, we have to direct you to the courts or the prosecutor's office.

### **What if I have a question about a past incident?**

Please provide as much specific information as possible about the incident to the BPD Communications Office. Given times, places or names, we can track it down and provide you the information.

### **Why don't Police make reports on everything they respond to?**

Police are charged with addressing criminal matters.

Officers often respond to calls where no criminal activity appears to have taken place. When that happens, often no police report is made.

Civil situations like neighbor disputes over property lines, water disputes, or landlord-tenant disputes, Fire or EMS assists often do not result in police reports.

Some accidents like construction accidents, falls, etc. may be incidents that are medical calls and police respond to assist, but if no criminal intent is apparent, there may not be a police report.

## **Public Records Requests**

Anything created by the Boise Police Department is a public record.

You may request any record.

Dispatch and 911 Tapes are the records of the Ada County Sheriff's Office. So are all traffic accident reports except fatals and DUI's.

You may request any case involving Boise Police through Communication Director's office. If the record is the custody of the sheriff's office, we will immediately forward the request to the county.

Idaho law provides all public records be accessible, unless specifically made exempt under Idaho Code 9-335 (printed later in this media guide).



### **For Police records, this means:**

- If a case is still under investigation, any or all of the related police records will likely not be available.
- If the investigation on a case is complete, however the case is still in court, any or all of the related police records will likely not be available.
- If the case is closed, and court proceedings are complete, the entire record is generally releasable, with possible redactions for victim's safety and privacy.

### **All public records requests from media made through the Boise Police Department should be:**

- in writing on media letterhead
- fax to BPD Public Records Custodian at **(208) 577-3809**
- as specific as possible, including names, dates, incidents and exactly what records you are requesting.

## **How long does it take to fill a Public Records Request?**

By law, the department has 3 – 10 working days to respond to your request.

If you have a pending deadline, please let us know and we'll make every effort to expedite your request. However, the legal review process must still take place



You will receive a letter from the department's public records custodian informing you of the status of your request (Can it be filled? Must it be denied and why? Cost?) as soon as that is determined. The Boise PD public records custodians do not work in the media office, and are a separate unit in the department.

## **Will it cost money?**

It might.

If there are no redactions needed, your public record is free up to 100 pages.

If redactions are necessary, the more redactions, the higher the cost.  
The average report cost is less than \$5.

## **How will the public records be delivered?**

You may receive the records only after payment has been received.

Payment must be from a check, money order or cash in the exact amount.

You can make payment and pick up the records at the records desk in the front lobby of the Public Safety Building on Barrister.

Public records are not faxed due to privacy and security concerns.

## **Critical Incident and High Risk Operations**

**Critical Incidents:** A critical incident is defined as one that involves Boise Police employees and results in death or life-threatening bodily injury, any intentional use of deadly force, or other incidents as deemed appropriate.

Updated information during a critical incident involving a Boise Police Officer or employee will be provided to media by the Chief or the Communications Director.

**CITF:** The Critical Incident Task Force is made up of all the law enforcement agencies in the Treasure Valley. The agencies provide independent investigations of incidents involving officers from a separate agency.

Generally, available public information on any particular incident will come from the agency involved in the incident, not the agency doing the investigation. For example, if a Boise Officer is involved in a critical incident, Boise PD will provide the media information.

When a CITF investigation is complete, however, media or the public wishing to view a copy of the investigation must request that report from the lead investigating agency. For example, if Boise PD took lead in investigating a critical incident involving an officer from another law enforcement agency, you would request the CITF report from Boise PD.

### **Bomb Scares – SWAT Operations:**

#### **Can we do a live shot during a bomb scare or SWAT operation?**

During a bomb scare, SWAT operation, or critical incident, the Chief, the Communications Director or the Incident Commander will request that media cooperate with the department to broadcast only those images that will not compromise officer or public safety.

This cooperation may include the location of live trucks, the location of the reporter on scene, and the background video shown while the incident is in progress.

*The danger is, television live shots may reveal to a suspect the position or tactics of officers during a critical incident. This may jeopardize public safety, officer safety and a peaceful resolution.*

*Some radio frequencies may also be a danger in triggering live explosive devices.*

It is department policy that media will be given a safe vantage point to record pictures for later broadcast.

The Boise Police Department and local media have an excellent history of mutual cooperation during critical incidents.

A growing number of cities have written agreements between media and the police department outlining live broadcasts during critical incidents. Most of those stem from cases where safety of the operation was compromised because of a media report. So far, that hasn't happened in this market. We hope it doesn't.



Idaho Code 9-335. Exemptions from disclosure – Confidentiality.

(1) Notwithstanding any statute or rule of court to the contrary, nothing in this chapter nor chapter 10, title 59, Idaho Code, shall be construed to require disclosure of investigatory records compiled for law enforcement purposes by a law enforcement agency, but such exemption from disclosure applies only to the extent that the production of such records would:

- (a) Interfere with enforcement proceedings;
- (b) Deprive a person of a right to a fair trial or an impartial adjudication;
- (c) Constitute an unwarranted invasion of personal privacy;
- (d) Disclose the identity of a confidential source and, in the case of a record compiled by a criminal law enforcement agency in the course of a criminal investigation, confidential information furnished only by the confidential source;
- (e) Disclose investigative techniques and procedures; or
- (f) Endanger the life or physical safety of law enforcement personnel.

(2) An inactive investigatory record shall be disclosed unless the disclosure would violate the provisions of subsection (1)(a) through (f) of this section. Investigatory record as used herein means information with respect to an identifiable person or group of persons compiled by a law enforcement agency in the course of conducting an investigation of a specific act or omission and shall not include the following information:

- (a) The time, date, location, and nature and description of a reported crime, accident, or incident;
- (b) The name, sex, age, and address of a person arrested, except as otherwise provided by law;
- (c) The time, date, and location of the incident and of the arrest;
- (d) The crime charged;
- (e) Documents given or required to be given to the person arrested;
- (f) Information and indictments except as otherwise provided by law; and
- (g) Criminal history reports.

As used herein, the term “law enforcement agency” means the office of the attorney general, the department of law enforcement, the office of any prosecuting attorney, sheriff or municipal police department.

(3) Whenever it is made to appear by verified petition to the district court of the county where the records or some part thereof are situated that certain investigative records are being improperly withheld from a member of the public, the court shall order the officer or person charged with withholding the records to disclose the investigative record or show cause why he should not do so. The court shall decide the case after examining the record in camera, papers filed by the parties, and such oral argument and additional evidence as the court may allow.

If the court finds that the public official’s decision to refuse disclosure is not justified, he shall order the public officials to make the record public. If the judge determines that the public official was justified in refusing to make the record public, he shall return the item to the public official without disclosing its content with an order supporting the decision refusing disclosure. Any person who fails to obey the order of the court shall be cited to show cause why he is not in contempt of court. The court may, in its discretion, award costs and fees to the prevailing party.



## Boise Police Department

### Official Ten-Signal Codes

- 10-1 - Unable to Copy
- 10-2 - Copy Loud and Clear
- 10-4 - Acknowledgement (OK)
- 10-6 - Busy – Unless Urgent
- 10-7 - Out of Service for Lunch
- 10-8 - Clear – Available for Calls
- 10-9 - Repeat
- 10-19 - Station (Barrister)
- 10-20 - Location
- 10-21 - Landline
- 10-22 - Disregard
- 10-23 - Arrive at Scene
- 10-25 - Report in Person (Meet)
- 10-27 - Drivers License Information
- 10-28 - Vehicle Registration Information
- 10-29 - Check for Wanted
- 10-33 - Emergency
- 10-41 - Beginning Tour of Duty
- 10-42 - Ending Tour of Duty or Residence
- 10-45 - Animal Carcass
- 10-46 - Stalled Vehicle – Motorist Assist
- 10-50 - Accident; PD-property damage, PI-personal injury, PP-on private property, F-fatal
- 10-55 - Intoxicated Driver
- 10-57 - Hit & Run Accident; PD, PI, PP, F, J-just occurred, R-report
- 10-66 - Message Cancellation
- 10-68 - Request to talk to... on another channel
- 10-74 - Not Wanted or Stolen
- 10-74R- Not Wanted or Stolen but has Criminal Record
- 10-76 - Enroute
- 10-95 - Prisoner/Subject in Custody
- 10-96 - Mental Subject
- 10-99 - Wanted/Stolen Indicated
- 10-100- DOA



*What are they talking about ???*

## **Frequently Used Boise Police Acronyms**

ABC	Alcohol Beverage Control
ACSO	Ada County Sheriff's Office
ADA#	Officers Badge Number
AFC	Acting Field Commander
AR	Armed Robbery
ATF	Alcohol Tobacco Firearms (Federal Agency)
ATL	Attempt to Locate
BAC	Blood Alcohol Content
BANDIT	Boise Area Narcotics Drug Interdiction Task Force
BPD	Boise Police Department
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch (computer system)
CCW	Carrying a Concealed Weapon
CID	Criminal Investigation Division (detectives)
COD	Community Outreach Division (SRO's bikes, mounted, NCO's)
CPA	Citizens Police Academy
CSI	Crime Scene Investigator
DC	Deputy Chief
DK	Drunk
DL	Drivers License
DR	Department Report
DRE	Drug Recognition Expert
DV	Domestic Violence
DWP	Driving Without Privileges
EOD	Explosives Ordinance Demolition (Bomb Squad)
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival

**BPD Acronyms – continued.....**



ESRO	Elementary School Resource Officer
FST's	Field Sobriety Test
GCPD	Garden City Police Department
IA	Internal Affairs
ISP	Idaho State Police
K9	Canine Unit
MDT	Mobile Data Terminal
MPD	Meridian Police Department
NCO	Neighborhood Contact Officer (COPS Unit)
OMB	Ombudsman
PD	Property Damage
PI	Personal Injury
PIO	Public Information Officer (Communications Director)
PIR	Public Information Request
PRR	Public Records Request
PSB	Public Safety Building (Barrister)
PV	Parole Violation
RP	Reporting Party
SOG	Special Operations Group – Includes SWAT, hostage negotiators, EOD
SOU	Special Operations Unit – SWAT
SRO	School Resource Officer
STEP	Selected Traffic Enforcement Program (Motors & DUI Patrols)
UTL	Unable to Locate
VW	Victim-Witness Coordinator
WC	Watch Commander