

On many occasions, we in law enforcement are faced with making comments to the media shortly after a “crisis” begins. The crisis could be internally induced such as the arrest of one of our own department’s members, or externally induced such as a shooting or an escape in our community. Good logic and training tells us to avoid making any statements until certain facts have been ascertained, but there are times when tremendous pressure from the community and the media practically demands an immediate comment or “sound bite.” The following list is designed to assist the public information officer in formulating the appropriate comment that must be given on the “spur of the moment.”

1. Display empathy. You are disturbed by the incident.
2. You are determined to set things right!
3. You share the concerns of the public and the media.
4. The allegations have raised some serious questions.
5. You are conducting a thorough investigation.
6. This is a pending investigation. You can’t comment on the specifics.
7. The department is aggressively working at getting answers to the issues.
8. We will get answers to all questions.
9. We will share our answers/findings with you.
10. This department is committed to the highest degree of professionalism.
11. This department is dedicated to serving the community.
12. We will not tolerate any failure to meet the high standards set for our personnel.
13. The thoughts (prayers) of the department go out to the families of the victims.
14. As information becomes available and is verified, we will provide it to you.

15. The full resources of the department are working on this case.
16. We are closely working and coordinating this matter with local, county, state, and federal agencies.
17. The results of our investigation will be reviewed by the County Police.
18. Our most seasoned investigators have been assigned to this investigation.
19. We are asking that the public refrain from entering this area to allow emergency crews to perform their jobs.
- 20: I have just arrived and as soon as I am briefed on the situation, I will meet with you.
21. The officer(s) has been administratively relieved of duty which is standard practice for this type of matter in the department.
22. The crime scene is very widespread and little information has been verified at this time.
23. The department takes pride in only furnishing accurate information.
24. This is a personnel matter and departmental policy prohibits me from commenting on it at this time.
25. Because there is pending litigation, the City Attorney has requested that the department not comment on the matter.
26. This department continually attempts to run a first—class operation and that is why all complaints and allegations against it are a major concern.
27. Explain the great harm that can result from the release of too much information at this time.
28. Remind the media that the possibility exists the allegation may be false.
29. Offer to get back to the reporter with an answer to the question.

30. Explain that the department is comprised of human beings who are subject to error. Occasionally, the system fails and training and procedures will be reviewed.
31. The investigation is in a critical phase and any release of information at this time could be detrimental to the outcome.
32. The circumstances of the situation are not clear at this time.
33. The police and fire departments presently have the situation under control. Please do not add to the congestion at the scene.
34. I speak for all members of the department when I say that we all grieve for the victims of this senseless tragedy.
35. We will provide the information as soon as the victim's family has been notified.
36. The investigation is proceeding at a rapid pace.
37. Certain items will have to be examined at the lab before we can comment on them.
38. I cannot comment in any detail except to confirm a few preliminary facts.
39. I am not going to speculate, however, I will confirm the fact that we are concerned about the situation.
40. Without compromising the investigation, allow me to clarify what we know at this point.
41. Our officers will look at all the facts and evidence before determining a course of action in this case.
42. Because of this incident, we are reviewing our policies, procedures, and training in an attempt to improve the overall quality of police service to the community.
43. Any comments made at this point would only be assumptions on my part.

44. We will need your assistance to assure that our community is accurately informed.
45. The tragic situation goes beyond our jurisdiction and investigative capabilities. Therefore, state and federal agencies have been asked to assist us.
46. There is no danger to the general public.
47. Investigators have been working around the clock and will continue to do so until an arrest is made.
48. We are working with the Medical Examiners Office to determine the cause of death.
49. We will be speaking with area residents as we are confident that someone must have seen the suspect.
50. We will use all available resources at our disposal to reach a successful conclusion in this investigation.
51. We have set up a HOTLINE so that people may provide information and remain anonymous if they choose.
52. We still have many witnesses to talk to.
53. This is an internal investigation and under state law, we cannot release information at this time.
54. The county prosecutor will be making a statement about the investigation.
55. There will be a full disclosure of information when my investigators have had time to evaluate the situation.
56. Our investigation at this time has found no information to support those allegations.
57. We were wrong in this particular case. We will take all necessary action that is needed to assure that it does not occur again.
58. I believe that question avoids the real issue here

59. An answer to that question would only inform the suspect about the level and progress of our investigation.
60. Due to the confidentiality granted to the anonymous source, I cannot at liberty to answer that question.
61. Our department is dedicated to the full release of accurate public information. When we have those facts, we will release them.
62. We are working closely with members of other departments. We will have a joint news release in one hour.
63. Our main concern right now is to conduct a professional and thorough investigation for the purpose of determining what actually happened.
64. Any comments at this point in our investigation would be speculative in nature and would serve no purpose in solving the case.
65. Any allegation of misconduct is taken very seriously by the department and is thoroughly investigated.
66. This is an outstanding organization and any allegation of misconduct is a major concern to me.
67. An immediate investigation by our Internal Affairs Section will be launched. This may take several weeks to complete. I will disclose the findings of this investigation at that time.
68. I would just like to remind you that the allegation may be false. The reputations and lives of innocent people can be destroyed.