

Directive 26.04 Media Notification Of Escapes

**STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS**

Directive: 26.04

Subject: Media Notification Of Escapes
Effective Date: May 20, 1991 **Review and Re-Issue Date:**
Supersedes: NEW **APA Rule Number:**

Recommended for approval by:		Authorized By:	
_____	_____	_____	_____
Signature	Date	Signature	Date

1. Authority:

1.1 Authority for this directive is derived from Policy #330, Media Relations.

2. Purpose:

2.1 The purpose of this directive is to create the process by which the media, and thereby the public, will be informed in a timely, standardized fashion of an escape from custody. The intent is to provide for the greatest possible public safety while being concerned not to create undue alarm.

3. Applicability/Accessibility

3.1 All individuals and groups affected by the operations of the Vermont Department of Corrections. Anyone may have a copy of this Directive.

4. Directive

4.1 Each facility and field office will develop a local procedure that implements this directive. A current copy of the procedure will be sent to the Chief of Public Information who will maintain a file of the procedures.

4.2 When any offender under facility or Field Supervision Unit (FSU) supervision escapes, fails to return from furlough or walks away (from a work crew or other supervised status) a media release will be issued to the media.

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4.3. Notification Priority

4.3.1 Escape notification shall occur in the following order of priority:

4.3.1.1 Nearest Vermont State Police unit, local police and sheriff's units as applicable and as noted in the procedure on police notification about escapes. See Escapes Policy 1051.

4.3.1.2 The appropriate facility/FSU unit and chain of command as noted in the unit escape procedures and department policy and directives. See Escapes Policy 1051 and Unusual Incidents 291.

4.3.1.3 Any victim as noted in the offender file and if the victim has indicated that they want such notification. See Release Notification to Victim's policy #362.

4.3.1.4 Other agencies with an interest in the escapee; Federal Marshals, Immigration, other states etc. See Escapes Policy 1051.

4.3.1.5 Media sources as outlined in this directive and local procedures developed to implement it.

4.3.1.6 In the case of failures to return, unless positive there is an intent to evade custody: wait two hours before issuing the media release. The reason for this is that there's no need to "raise the alarm" when the furlougee may not have returned exactly on time because of reasons beyond his/her control. '. See Escapes policy 1051.

4.3.1.6 A copy of the media release will be sent to the Chief of Public Information at Central Office within one day of issuance and note approximately when it was sent out to the media. Faxing the media release to Central Office may be a helpful procedure.

4.4 Media Release Content

4.4.1 The media release will be issued on letterhead and contain the following information for each escapee: (See Form - Attachment 1)

4.4.1.1 Time/date and the words "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE". Also note the time when the GBC was issued.

4.4.1.2 Name and DOB of escapee and physical description inclusive of Weight, height, hair color, build, complexion, identifying or unusual

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characteristics like scars or tattoos and clothing worn at time of escape

4.4.1.3 Crime(s) for which the offender is currently in custody to include a BRIEF description of what occurred during commission of the offense(s).

4.4.1.4 Minimum and maximum release dates of sentence as applicable.

4.4.1.5 Status of abscondment (escape, walkaway or failure to return)

4.4.1.6 BRIEF description of event (i.e. walked away from a work crew, escaped from a secure setting, failed to return from treatment pass). State what town, park or location is involved so persons in the area will be alerted.

4.4.1.7 Degree of danger to the community. See, attached grid for determination and state (for example) that there is a misdemeanor history of violence (as noted on the grid). (See Attachment 2)

4.4.1.8 Prior record of violence if known.

4.4.1.9 Sentence length(s), date received and/or detention status. For example;

4.4.1.9.1 Breaking & Entering -3yrs to 5yrs- 10/1/90

4.4.1.9.2 Operating without Owners Consent -30 days to 6 months- 3/6/91

4.4.1.9.3 Under detainers to New Jersey.

4.4.1.10 Avoid using abbreviations, especially of crimes, as they may not be intelligible to the media people who will use the release.

4.4.1.11 Who is issuing the release, who to contact if there are further questions and a phone number. For the sake of consistency, a single source should be designated to answer inquiries.

4.4.1.12 All documents issued relating to an escape will contain the following warning on each page with the appropriate phone numbers filled in:

IF SIGHTED DO NOT APPREHEND. IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY THE POLICE

AT _____

FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS AT _____

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4.4.1.13 A black and white photograph of the individual will accompany any print copy of the release delivered to the print and television media. It is not necessary to provide one for the radio media. The photo should be as recent as possible and if there are any discrepancies between the photo and the offender at the time of escape it should be noted on the photo in a manner not damaging to the photo. The photo should contain the offender's name and date of birth on the back.

4.5. Media Release Dissemination

4.5.1 The local procedure will clearly state how the media release will be disseminated. The rationale involved is based in the issues of timeliness of dissemination, degree of danger to the community, the immediacy with which the media source can disseminate the information and any limitations our resources may impose upon our ability to get the word out.

4.5.2 The local plan will relate the Degree of Danger Determination grid outcome to the release dissemination in the following manner (See Attachment 2):

4.5.2.1 If the offender is categorized as "Exercise Caution", at minimum, the two largest (by audience) 24 hr local radio stations, the, nearest TV station and the nearest daily print media will be notified.

4.5.2.2 If the offender is categorized as "Potentially Dangerous", at minimum, the four largest (by audience) 24 hr Area radio stations, the nearest two TV stations, the local cable outlet(s), the nearest daily Print media, the Vermont Press Bureau, the Associated Press and the Vermont News Service will be notified.

4.5.2.3 If the offender is categorized as "Dangerous", at minimum, all of the media sources in number 2 will be notified as well all Vermont based TV stations and any TV station within 60 miles of Vermont's borders. In addition, the Chief of Public Information will be contacted telephonically and informed of the release.

4.5.2.4 Radio stations designated in the local plan will be contacted first and by telephone as they can interrupt their programming more readily than TV and are not on the 24 hr schedule that the daily print media

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are. A confirming copy of the release can follow by FAX or mail depending on how the local plan is coordinated with the radio source.

- 4.5.2.5** The other media can be contacted by phone (with follow up hard copy) or FAX in the following order: TV stations, print media and media (wire services) bureaus. In some cases, hand delivery by a staff member should be considered as the best method of informing a particular source.
- 4.5.2.6** A complete copy of the media release will be provided to the nearest state police Public Information Officer to provide consistency. The local procedure will address coordination of media notification and information with the nearest state police unit.
- 4.5.2.7** A copy of the media release will be mailed to all other Vermont correctional facilities and offices and the receiving unit will post them where staff can easily be aware of them.
- 4.5.2.8** A record should be kept of when and to whom the release was disseminated. For telephone contacts the time, date and person should be noted. For FAX contacts note to what source and the time / date when successfully sent.

4.6 Media Release When Escapee Is Returned To Custody

- 4.6.1** If an escapee is returned to custody in less than 7 days from the time of escape, the receiving unit will immediately inform the unit that issued the original release. That unit will then issue a release that notifies the media of the return of the escapee to custody. If the escapee is returned to custody after more than 7 days the Chief of Public Information will be notified as soon as possible and will coordinate the media release. "
- 4.6.2** The media release will contain the following information: (See Attachment 3)
 - 4.6.2.1** Time and date and the words "FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE"
 - 4.6.2.2** The name and DOB of the escapee.
 - 4.6.2.3** When the escape occurred and crime(s) and sentence(s) for which offender was in custody and type of escape.

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4.6.2.4 BRIEF description of how the person was returned to custody. For example; turned self in, captured by police, captured out of state, Spotted by DOC staff etc.

4.6.2.5 Who is issuing the release, who to contact if there are questions and a phone number.

4.6.3 The media release will be disseminated as in 3. Media Release Dissemination above and to the same sources the original release went to. While there is less urgency to inform the public of when someone is returned to custody, it is important that notification occur as soon as is reasonably possible so that the public may feel safer.

5. Training Method

5.1

6. Quality Assurance Processes

6.1

7. Financial Impact:

7.1

8. References

9. Responsible Director and Draft Participants

This policy researched and/or drafted by: The Public Information Officer Dennis F. DeBevec. May 1991.