

Plano Police Department



PIO



MEDIA GUIDE

Public Information Office • 972-941-2433



Plano Police Department *Media Guide*

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

The Plano Police Department is a major source of news in the Plano community. Like the news media, the Plano 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 Plano Police Department to respond to media inquiries as quickly, completely and accurately as possible. This media guide is a part of the Department's general philosophy to operate in an open, cooperative partnership with the community.

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

This guide will help you know:

- What information is available from the PPD.
- How to best access that information.
- When and why information may *not* be available.
- How to access information from the Department during breaking news or critical incidents.
- How to obtain supporting or background information, like crime stats or trends.
- What experts are available from the PPD 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:

Officer David Tilley

Public Information Officer

Office: 972-941-2433

Cell: 972-816-8218

FAX: 972-941-2166

E-mail: davidti@plano.gov

The Plano PD PIO handles media relations for the Department and is the authorized spokesperson for the Department. Officer Tilley reports directly to the Chief of Police and serves as the official Department spokesperson for the media and in all matters pursuant to other types of inquiries from various sources. Officer Tilley is assisted by a PIO Coordinator Heather Bowden and four acting PIOs. You may also elect to contact the PIO Coordinator for routine questions or basic information on breaking news:

Heather Bowden

PIO Coordinator

Office: 972-941-2295

Cell: 972-971-8864

FAX: 972-941-2166

E-mail: heatherb@plano.gov

The Unit's Acting PIOs are called into service during large incidents that require the presence of more than one PIO or in Officer Tilley's absence. The Acting PIOs are all Police Officers and are assigned to various Units within the PPD:

Officer Jerry Minton

Fraud and Forgery Detective assigned to the Criminal Investigative Services Division.

Officer Andrae Smith

Traffic Investigator assigned to the Patrol Services Division.

Officer Allison McCann

Patrol Officer assigned to the Patrol Services Division.

Officer Stephanie Benjamin

Patrol Officer assigned to the Patrol Services Division.

Evenings, Holidays: The PPD does not staff a PIO during the evening or weekends. However a PIO is always on-call for major breaking news. After hours, the on-call PIO will generally not have information regarding non-fatal car crashes, routine arrests, crimes not resulting in death or critical injury, or the status of cases that are not considered breaking news.

However, if you call or email the PIO after hours or on a weekend, please leave specific topic and deadline information and every effort will be made to return your call as soon as possible.

WHO TO CALL?

Breaking News

Breaking news is almost always posted FIRST in a News Alert via email and sent to all established media contacts. The information may then be sent to Twitter. Twitter updates on breaking news may be posted prior to an official press release from the Department.

Follow Plano Police on:

- twitter.com/@planoplicedept
- facebook.com/planotexaspolicedepartment
- youtube.com/user/cityofplanotexas
- nextdoor.com
- instagram.com/planoplicedept

To Receive PPD News Releases

PPD News Releases are posted on www.planopolice.org

Anyone may sign up to receive PPD news releases.

To sign up, email Heather Bowden [heatherb@plano.gov]

PLANO POLICE WEBSITE

www.planopolice.org

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

Please bookmark www.planopolice.org and turn to it regularly to acquaint yourself with the Department and stay updated on current news items and events.

On a big, breaking story, www.planopolice.org is your source for constantly updated information.

The PPD website includes:

- **News Releases** – archives are available for the past year;
- **Incident Blotters** – archives are published daily are available for the past year;
- **Crime Stats** – recent and historical trends, and regional comparisons;
- **Current Event Information** – times, places, details of events PPD or its Officers are involved in;
- **Department Organization** – Organizational chart, Department mission, etc. Traffic Safety, Employment Opportunities, Online Services, and more.

PLANO POLICE WEBSITE

The PPD website includes: *(continued from page 3)*

- **Department by Divisions** – information on each division and unit, from Patrol to the Special Operations Unit (SWAT) to School Resource Officers;
- **Multi-Media** – informational videos on Department activities and divisions.
- **Online Police Services** – Traffic Crash reports, Sexual Offender information, Crime Reports, Crime Tips and Brochures, etc.
- **Other information** – Publications and Forms, Citizen Programs, Community Traffic Safety, Employment Opportunities, Online Services, and more.

*Anytime you can direct readers, viewers, or listeners to our website – **great!***

PPD DAILY CALLS FOR SERVICE

Monday – Friday, the Plano Police Public Information Unit makes public a report of all Calls for Service received in the past 24 hours. Like all news releases, our police blotters are published at www.planopolice.org and may be downloaded at your convenience.

This information includes:

- Date of Incident
- Time of Incident
- Incident Type
- Call Disposition
- Incident Address

Some incident types are not included in the daily police blotter. Specifically these include:

- Attempted Suicides
- Child Abuse
- Child Neglect
- Injured Juveniles
- Juvenile Problems
- Mental Subjects
- Overdoses
- Prostitution
- Runaways
- Sex Assaults
- Sex Offenses

CRIMES & ARRESTS

Plano Police follow Texas Code 552.108 and the PPD Media Policy when releasing information to the public.

The information that is typically available through the Department's Public Information Office includes:

- 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 suspect's detention and amount of bond (following arraignment)
- Names of deceased victims, following notification of next of kin;
- Auto accident statistics are available from the Texas Department of Public Safety Crash records Bureau: (512) 424-2600.
- Driver's crash reports are available online through Police Reports.us (planotx.policereports.us/)

** If the location of arrest/crime identifies victims, this information will not be available.*

What Information may be Available:

- Specific cause of death, if officially determined by the coroner
- Very general description of injuries sustained as viewed by the Officers; typically described a life threatening or non-life threatening (as opposed to specific medical conditions).
- Booking photos are available upon request.

What Information is not Available?

The following information is protected by law under Texas Code (Section #552.108):

- Identity or address of victims;
- Names of juveniles charged with status crimes, such as curfew or smoking violations, will not be released;
- Identity or address of witnesses;
- Identity of juvenile suspects under age 17;
- Medical condition 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.

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CRIMES & ARRESTS

What Information is not Available? *(continued from page 5)*

The following information is protected by law under Texas Code (Section #552.108):

- 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. Medical conditions are protected under the medical records provision of the public records act. If a police action results in the hospitalization of an individual for treatment of mental illness, it's the policy of the Plano Police Department to publically state that the individual is in protective custody. Additional information will likely not be available as they too are restricted in providing information due to patient's privacy rights.

Child protection actions and child custody 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. It is the policy of the PPD to publically state only that children have been placed in "safe" custody without further specifying their location, the agency or family member involved.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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 so as to insure safety and not conflict with police operations.

There may be times when the PIO will be able to escort media to areas prior to the area being opened to the public. First and foremost, that depends on safety and the needs of the investigation. The PIO for the incident will let you know if this opportunity is available.

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

When does a person of interest become a suspect?

When an arrest warrant is issued. Prior to that, the Department may release names of individuals believed to be connected to incidents as a "person of interest wanted for

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When does a person of interest become a suspect? *(continued from page 6)*

questioning”. However, it is the practice for Plano Police to only call individuals criminal suspects once they have been charged with a crime.

Can I get updates on major cases on the weekend? What about crime stats or other background information for a story?

Please plan ahead if you want to do a weekend update on a major, ongoing case. The Public Information Officer may not provide a weekend update if new information is not available on a major case.

Crime Analysis personnel also work do not work after hours or weekends. If you need crime statistics for a weekend story or anticipate an update on an ongoing case or public safety topic, please plan ahead and get the info during the week from the Open Records Unit.

Why can't the Department release medical conditions?

The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPPA) provides people with privacy regarding their medical conditions.

It's the policy of the Plano Police Department to release a general description of injuries sustained at a crime or accident scene, non-life threatening injuries, for example. Except for general descriptions of injuries sustained at a crime or accident scene, as pertinent to the crime or accident that occurred, the Plano 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.

When does PPD request the Media's help with a Missing Person case?

When Officers have a true concern for the person's safety due to the possibility of foul play, health or medical issues an Endangered Missing Persons Advisory will be issued. The PPD does not request media assistance for most general missing person's cases; however, media assistance, when requested to locate a missing person, is greatly appreciated.

Incidents involving missing persons and runaways are always agonizing for families involved. To make sure the cases where a life may be in danger get the proper attention, evidence of foul play or urgent or suspicious circumstances must exist before the Department issues an Endangered Missing Persons Advisory.

How is an Endangered Missing Person different from an Amber Alert?

Endangered Missing Persons Advisories are issued by the Plano Police Department on the criteria listed above. An Amber Alert is issued by Plano Police Department when:

- A child known or suspected by law enforcement officials to have been abducted;
- The abduction occurred within
- The child is 17 years of age or younger;

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How is an Endangered Missing Person different from an Amber Alert?

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- Law enforcement must believe the child is in imminent danger of serious bodily harm or death;

There must be enough descriptive information to believe that an AMBER Alert will assist in the recovery of the child.

More information about the Amber, Blue, Silver and Endangered Missing Persons alert programs are available on the Texas Department of Public Safety's website

<https://www.txdps.state.tx.us/dem/Operations/Alerts/index.htm>

What about the identity of victims of traffic crashes?

Names of those cited or arrested as a result of a traffic crash may be released by the PPD. Names of victims who are injured or otherwise involved but not arrested or cited will not be released due to the open investigation or under the privacy interest exclusion of Texas Code 552.108.

If the accident is a fatal, the name of the deceased victim will be released as soon as family is notified.

Copies of crash reports are available on-line at:

planotx.policereports.us/

What if I get a tip about an ongoing investigation?

If you ask about something the Department is currently investigating, we may or may not be able to confirm the investigation. Releasing information 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.

If you wish to provide this information to the Department, please call our CISD tip line:

972.941.2148

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

The Plano Police Department does not release the names of crime victims and witnesses. In some cases, the Public Information Officer may work with the assigned detective and the media if a crime victim agrees to an interview.

Requests like, "I need to find a fraud victim" is not something the 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.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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

Yes. The PPD has a very active Open Records Unit. The only limitations are time and reporting methods. The PPD can only provide information the Department actually collects, and due to work load, it may take several days to track down very specific information.

Can the Plano Police Department help me with questions about cases in other cities?

Generally, no. The PPD cannot provide information when another police agency is the primary responder or investigator. The PPD has many mutual aid agreements and will respond to assist other agencies when requested and often provides specialty services to other departments, like the Bomb Squad, K9's, or the SWAT team. The PPD can provide information on how we assisted other Departments, but will have to refer you to the primary agency for incident details.

Will Plano Police comment on issues affecting other police agencies?

Generally, no. The Department can only speak to issues that involve or directly impact the PPD. That's what we know and that's what we can speak confidently about.

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

You will have to check with the appropriate court or with the prosecutors for information, on hearing dates, camera requests, etc. The Plano Police Department deals with the investigative phase of a case. After a suspect has been arraigned, we have to direct media inquiries to the courts or the prosecutor's office for additional information

To learn more about our local municipal court, go to
<http://www.plano.gov/index.aspx?NID=196>

To learn more about our county courts, go to:
http://www.co.collin.tx.us/district_courts/index.jsp

Will the Plano Police comment on proposed legislation?

No. It's not the responsible, professional or ethical thing for the Department to do.

Why don't police make reports on everything they respond to?

Police are charged with addressing criminal matters. Officers may respond to calls where it turns out no criminal activity appears to have taken place. When that happens, a miscellaneous report may be taken, but more likely, 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.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How do I get a “ride-along” with an Officer?

At this time, the Department does not allow “ride alongs” with an Officer on patrol.

When is a spokesperson from the PPD available to grant interviews?

A spokesperson from the Plano Police Department, often the PIO, will be available to answer media questions on most criminal cases that are under investigation prior to the case being taken over by prosecutors. Typically, detectives working the case are not available for media interviews

There are some times when a spokesperson may **NOT** be available:

- If a suspect has already been arraigned in court, The PPD will refer you to the proper prosecutor’s office. The PPD works closely with prosecutors toward successful prosecution of criminal suspects and once a case is in court, public information will only come from the court process.
- The PPD cannot comment on a case that is under investigation by another agency.
- Plano Police may not be able to comment on topics that do not affect or directly impact the Department. Our mission is to responsibly educate citizens on public safety issues. That means Plano PD will typically not respond to “what if” type interview requests.

What if I have a security question involving a school?

The Plano Police Department works closely with the Plano Independent School District. Plano PD also has a large, active School Resource Officer program with School Resource Officers (SRO) in every high school and senior high school in the city.

However, school security is at the direction of the school district and we must refer you to them for your school security questions.

Please contact the Executive Director of Safety and Security Services for PISD Joe Parks at 469-752-8100

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

You may request information on any incident involving the Plano Police through the Public Information Office. Texas law provides all public records be accessible, unless specifically made exempt under Texas Code (Section #552.021).

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

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 any or all of the related police records may be available (unless otherwise exempt by law).
- 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 Open Records requests must be submitted in writing via the following options:

In Person: please visit us at Police Headquarters - 909 East 14th Street, or our Joint Use Facility at 7501 Independence Parkway.

Fax: (972) 941-2191

Email: (policeopenrecords@plano.gov)

Electronic form: (www.planopolice.org/xxx)

Requests submitted in writing should be mailed to:

Plano Police Department

Open Records Unit

PO Box 860358

Plano, Texas 75086

Be 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 up to 10 business days to respond to your request from the date of receipt. Most requests for active cases are processed within 48 hours. Every effort will be made to process your request as soon as possible. However, the Open Government Act requires that all requests are treated the same and no preferential treatment is given.

You will receive a response from the Department's Open Records Assistant 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 PPD Open Records Unit does not work in the media office and is a separate unit within the Department.

Will it cost money?

It might. Your public record is free up to 10 pages. The average report cost is less than \$5.

PUBLIC RECORDS REQUESTS

How will the public records be delivered?

Requests for information that consist of 10 pages or less may be faxed, emailed, picked-up in person or mailed upon receipt of a SASE to the requestor. Requests for information consisting of 10 pages or more may be filled 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 Plano Police Department at 909 14th Street, Plano, TX 75074.

What information can be released on an active case?

The 2012 Open Government Handbook specifies the information that is required to be released on an active case. However, some of this information may be withheld depending on the type of incident.

Section 552.101: Information Confidential by Law

Excerpts from required public disclosure information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory or by judicial decision.

This includes (but is not limited to):

Juvenile Offenders - Juvenile law enforcement records relating to conduct occurring prior to January 1, 1996, and from September 1, 1997 through the present are subject to the confidentiality provisions of Section 51.14(d) and 58.007 of the Family Code and may not be disclosed to the public.

Child Abuse - Reports, records, and working papers used or developed in an investigation of alleged child abuse or neglect under 261.201(a) of the Family Code and the identity of the person making the report.

Mental Commitments/Suicides

Sexual Assaults

What if I have a question about an incident that occurred a long time ago?

Please file a Public Information Request with the Police Open Records Unit and provide as much specific information as possible about the incident. Given times, places or names, we may be able to track it down and provide you with the information you've requested.

CRITICAL INCIDENT & HIGH RISK OPERATIONS

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 Public Information Officer or the Incident Commander will request that media cooperate with the Department to broadcast only those images that will not compromise the Officer or impact the safety of the public.

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 Plano 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.

Why does the Plano Police Department close the airspace over an on-going incident?

Any incident involving a suspect actively using a weapon capable of an explosion or shooting a projectile will result in the Department closing the airspace over an active incident. This closure is due to our concern for the safety of the helicopter, the helicopter pilot, the public, and Officers. We will also close the airspace over any incident where the noise of a hovering helicopter will interfere with communication (via handheld radio or cell phone).

Texas Code Sec. 552.108.

EXCEPTION: CERTAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT, CORRECTIONS,
AND PROSECUTORIAL INFORMATION.

(a) Information held by a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if:

- (1) release of the information would interfere with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime;
- (2) it is information that deals with the detection, investigation, or prosecution of crime only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication;
- (3) it is information relating to a threat against a peace officer or detention officer collected or disseminated under Section 411.048; or
- (4) it is information that:
 - (A) is prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation; or
 - (B) reflects the mental impressions or legal reasoning of an attorney representing the state.

(b) An internal record or notation of a law enforcement agency or prosecutor that is maintained for internal use in matters relating to law enforcement or prosecution is excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if:

- (1) release of the internal record or notation would interfere with law enforcement or prosecution;
- (2) the internal record or notation relates to law enforcement only in relation to an investigation that did not result in conviction or deferred adjudication; or
- (3) the internal record or notation:
 - (A) is prepared by an attorney representing the state in anticipation of or in the course of preparing for criminal litigation; or
 - (B) reflects the mental impressions or legal reasoning of an attorney representing the state.

(c) This section does not except from the requirements of Section 552.021 information that is basic information about an arrested person, an arrest, or a crime.

FREQUENTLY USED ACRONYMS

ATF	Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms
ACOP	Assistant Chief of Police
CCSO	Collin County Sheriff's Office
ATF	Alcohol Tobacco Firearms (Federal Agency)
ATL	Attempt to Locate
ALPR	Automatic License Plate Reader
AVL	Automatic Vehicle Locator
BAC	Blood Alcohol Content
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch (computer system)
CAPers	Crimes Against Persons Unit
CAPP	Citizen's Assisting Plano Police
CHL	Concealed Handgun License
CISD	Criminal Investigation Services Division
CPA	Citizens Police Academy
CPU	Crime Prevention Unit
CSI	Crime Scene Investigator
DL	Drivers License
ESU	Emergency Services Unit
ETA	Estimated Time of Arrival
FLID	Failure to Leave ID (Crash)
FMFR	Failure to Maintain Financial Responsibility
FOIA	Freedom of Information Act
FST	Field Sobriety Test
IA	Internal Affairs
K9	Canine Unit
LTC	Legacy Town Center
MCP	Medical Center of Plano
MDC	Mobile Data Computer
NPO	Neighborhood Police Officer
PI	Public Intoxication
PISD	Plano Independent School District
PIO	Public Information Officer
PV	Parole Violation
RLC	Red Light Camera
RP	Reporting Party
SRO	School Resource Officer
STEP	Selected Traffic Enforcement Program
TABC	Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission
UTL	Unable to Locate
WC	Watch Commander
800	Plano Police Main Headquarters (909 14 th Street)
801	Plano Police Substation (7501-A Independence Pkwy)
802	Plano Police Substation (5600 Democracy Drive)