



State of New Jersey

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
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Executive Director

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All New Jersey Law Enforcement Executives
via email only

Re: Responding to Press Inquiries Following Fatal Police Encounters

Dear Prosecutors, Chiefs, Sheriffs, and Directors:

The Attorney General recognizes the responsibility of law enforcement chief executives to address the public safety concerns of their communities. In the aftermath of a critical incident, the prompt dissemination of information often serves to calm the community and maintain trust in local law enforcement agencies. This can often be accomplished through the thoughtful use of press releases and social media messaging. The purpose of issuing a press release, social media message or pre-recorded statement by a law enforcement executive after a fatal police encounter or critical incident should be strictly limited to the following areas of focus:

- Assuring the public that there is no active or ongoing threat to the public at large;
- Informing the public of areas to avoid to facilitate law enforcement response or alleviate traffic congestion;
- Identifying the agency responsible for investigation of the incident.

The below press release template may be used by state, county and municipal law enforcement agencies involved in a fatal police encounter or death-in-custody that is being investigated by the Attorney General's Office of Public Integrity and Accountability ("OPIA"), in accordance with Attorney General's Law Enforcement Directive 2019-4 (<https://www.nj.gov/oag/dcj/agguide/directives/ag-Directive-2019-4.pdf>).



Law enforcement agencies must refrain from including any statements that may impact the investigation, including but not limited to, identifying any individuals involved in the incident, attributing culpability or lack thereof to any parties involved or expressing support for, condemnation of, or approval/disapproval of actions taken before, during, or after the incident.

Any agency seeking to provide additional information not contained in the template below must first confer with, and obtain approval from, the Attorney General's Communications Office.

Fatal Incident in [City/Borough/Township]

1. On [Date, at approximately time], in [City/Borough/Township], a police encounter occurred in the vicinity of [general location – not specific address] resulting in [#] individuals sustaining [life threatening / fatal] injuries.
2. [Optional: # members of [police department] were removed from the scene for medical treatment. Their injuries appear to be [life threatening / not life threatening] at this time].
3. [Optional: The involved officer(s) were not injured during this incident.]
4. As the safety and well-being of our community are our top priorities, please know there is no active or ongoing threat to the public.
5. [Optional: The scene of the incident has been secured by law enforcement.]
6. [Optional: Residents should avoid [location of road closures].
7. This incident is being investigated by the New Jersey Office of the Attorney General, and I cannot comment on the facts or circumstances of that investigation. The Office of the Attorney General will provide updates on the status of their investigation at an appropriate time.

The information contained below may be included in agency press releases or in response to press inquiries received at any law enforcement agency related to a fatal police encounter investigation:

The Attorney General's Office of Public Integrity and Accountability ("OPIA") is investigating the circumstances of this death. A 2019 statute, N.J.S.A. 52:17B-107(a)(2), requires that the Attorney General's Office conduct all investigations when a person's death occurs during an encounter with a law enforcement officer acting in the officer's official capacity or while the decedent is in custody. The results of all such investigations must be presented to a grand jury to determine if the evidence supports the return of an indictment against the involved officer or officers. The purpose of this law is for the public to have confidence that the investigation is done fully, fairly, impartially, and independently of any potential bias.



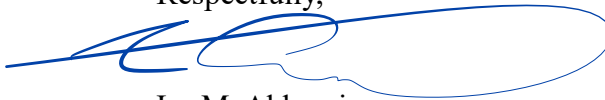
All media inquiries concerning this incident should be directed to the Attorney General's Communications Office at OAGPress@njoag.gov.

Further information on OPIA's processes for investigating fatal police encounters are below:

The Independent Prosecutor Directive is posted on the Attorney General's website and is available here: [Independent Prosecutor Directive](#)

OPIA's standard operating procedures for grand jury presentations of investigations involving fatal police encounters are also posted on the Attorney General's website, and are available here: [OPIA Grand Jury SOPs](#)

Respectfully,



Isa M. Abbassi
Executive Director

CC: Matthew J. Platkin, Attorney General
Lyndsay V. Ruotolo, First Assistant Attorney General
Nicholas Kormann, Deputy First Assistant Attorney General
Drew Skinner, Executive Director of OPIA
Sharon Lauchaire, Communications Director

