

## CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

0613

(September 1991)

Since court policies about releasing suspects' names and certain information change continuously--especially in situations involving juveniles--it is difficult to standardize a news release procedure.

When faced with requests for information regarding the status of an investigation or a suspect's name, information officers should consult with the investigating officer. It is the investigating officer's responsibility to know what information can or cannot be released. If in doubt, the investigating officer consults with his or her immediate superior, the regional law enforcement officer, or the District Attorney's office.

However, the Incident Commander must clear the cause of a fire before releasing any information. In many cases, the fire cause is not determined and suspects are not identified until after the fire is out. In the meantime, information officers can advise reporters that "the fire's cause is under investigation." Information officers should get all information from investigators regarding the cause in writing. Information officers cannot release suspects names until they are booked or a citation is written and clearance is obtained from the investigator and the Incident Commander.

CAL FIRE, like other government agencies, enjoys certain privileged activities. Some items are not released as public information:

- Information or suspects' names where release could jeopardize the investigation
- Subsequent prosecution or introduced liability
- Personal and disciplinary problems or action
- Disclosure of the names of individuals receiving rewards for information leading to the arrest and conviction of suspects

For more information on the legalities involved in the release of information, see Section 0622, Statutes and Guidelines.

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