



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 13, 2026

TO: Media Identification Card Program Holders & Applicants

FROM: Scott Wahl, Chief of Police

SUBJECT: Media Identification Card Program Termination Notice

First and foremost, the San Diego Police Department's goal is to help and support our media partners in doing their jobs. SDPD recognizes the critical role the media plays in delivering news that is both timely and transparent for the public. We are committed to ensuring that all members of the press are treated with fairness and respect, particularly during disasters and emergencies.

Having served as SDPD's Public Information Officer and now as Chief, I know the value of good relationships with our media. I have made it clear that we must continue to build relationships with the media, respond promptly, and work collaboratively on emerging news.

After careful consideration, we've decided to discontinue the Media Identification Card (or Press Pass) Program and the associated parking placards, effective February 13, 2026.

This decision follows a review of current practices, state and federal law, and the evolving landscape of modern journalism.

While SDPD will no longer issue media identification cards, the Department will continue to uphold the rights of all lawful news gatherers as permitted under California Penal Code 409.5 & 409.6 and other applicable laws.

We will notify regional public information officers of this change and will be disseminating training to our officers, so they are aware of the laws pertaining to media.

We encourage media professionals to continue engaging with our Media Relations Unit for media inquiries. Our goal remains to facilitate open dialogue between the news, the community and law enforcement.

Thank you for your continued partnership in serving San Diegans through your reporting.

Please see a few Q&A below for additional information.

What happens to my Media Identification Card?

The San Diego Police Department will no longer issue media identification cards or parking placards to members of the media as of February 13, 2026. For those who currently possess SDPD Media Identification Cards and parking placards, you do not need to turn them in, however, once they expire, they will be null and void. If anyone has an application to renew their identification card, it will not be processed.

What about parking for news media?

The San Diego Police Department is aware of the need to cover critical public safety events. News media should abide by all legal laws and park safely while reporting throughout the region. As of February 13, 2026, parking placards will no longer be issued by the San Diego Police Department.

How will officers identify the media?

SDPD will provide information to all officers on the laws governing media access to disaster areas, First Amendment activities, and how to identify media.

To assist officers, media members are encouraged to carry a business ID card from their news agency or organization or a business card that may help verify their news affiliation.

SDPD is making our training information available to other regional Public Information Officers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "SMW-P".

Scott Wahl
Chief of Police