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## Five Principles of Notification

### In Person

- Always do the notification in person, never by phone!
- For family members living out of the local area, arrange for authorities in that area to make the notification in person.
- Immediately find the firefighter's emergency contact information to know who needs to be notified in person. Usually, the spouse (or unmarried partner) and parents of the firefighter should be the first priority.

### In Time and with Certainty

- Before making notification, have positive identification of the deceased firefighter. Obviously, errors in identity can cause extreme trauma.
- Never discuss a fatality over the radio. This may result in a family member receiving the news before you can notify them in person.
- Quickly gather as much information about the incident as possible before making the notification. Survivors will likely have questions.
- Get to the survivors quickly. Don't let the media notify them first.

### In Pairs

- Have two people present to make the notification. Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions when they learn of the death.
- Use the employee's emergency contact information to identify a uniformed member of the fire service to accompany the department's representative. It is helpful to have the department chaplain or a friend of the family, too.
- Take two vehicles, if possible. This will allow one of you to take a survivor to the hospital, if necessary, while the second person stays with other survivors.
- Before you arrive, decide who will speak and what that person will say.
- Rehearse what you are going to say. Consider writing it down.



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## In Plain Language

- Clearly identify yourself and present identification; ask to come in.
- Notification should take place in a private setting.
- If you don't know the family member, make sure you are talking to the right person.
- Begin with "I have very bad news," or "I'm so sorry to have to tell you this."
- Use the words "dies" and "dead" rather than terms such as "passed away" so the message is clear. Speak slowly. Get to the point quickly.
- Calmly answer questions. It is fine to say, "I don't know" if you don't.
- Use his or her name when referring to the firefighter, rather than saying "the body."

## With Compassion

- Allow survivors to express emotions. Don't talk them out of their grief.
- Accept your own emotions. It's okay if you cry but stay very calm.
- Never leave immediately after making a notification. Ask if there is a friend or family member that you could help them notify. Ask if there is a pastor/clergy you could call for them. Offer to help call friends or family members. Do not leave before someone else arrives.
- Do not take the firefighter's personal items with you when you make the notification. Tell the family they will receive them later. Most survivors will need some time before they feel able to deal with these items.
- Provide the survivor the opportunity to see the deceased firefighter, even if the body is badly disfigured. Offer to transport the family to where the firefighter is, and help prepare them for what they will see.
- Before leaving, write down important information, including the names and phone numbers of the department personnel who will work with the family.
- Have one member of the department stay with the family, unless the family declines.





## Signs of Grief

| Emotional Signs  | Behavioral Signs   |
|--|--|
| <p>sadness    helplessness<br/>                     relief    loneliness<br/>                     guilt    yearning<br/>                     anxiety    shock<br/>                     anger    freedom<br/>                     fatigue    numbness</p> | <p>social withdrawal<br/>                     crying and sighing<br/>                     searching and calling out<br/>                     absentmindedness<br/>                     sleep and appetite disturbance<br/>                     avoiding reminders of the deceased<br/>                     dreaming of the deceased<br/>                     carrying objects belonging to the deceased<br/>                     wearing clothes belonging to the deceased</p> |
| Cognitive Signs  | Physical Signs   |
| <p>disbelief<br/>                     confusion<br/>                     preoccupation<br/>                     hallucinations<br/>                     denial<br/>                     a sense of presence of the deceased</p>                          | <p>hollow stomach<br/>                     tightness of chest<br/>                     dry mouth<br/>                     breathlessness<br/>                     lack of energy<br/>                     feeling of panic<br/>                     muscle weakness<br/>                     depersonalization<br/>                     over-sensitivity to noise</p>  |



## Signs That a Survivor May Need Additional Help

- many months after the death, grief is more intense
- recurring recollections of the death that disrupts daily activities
- nightmares
- flashbacks
- avoidance of any thoughts or feelings regarding the death
- preoccupation with the death
- over-idealization of the deceased and of your relationship
- poor memory
- significant decrease in normal activities
- depression, sadness, loneliness, and hopelessness
- withdrawal from other people
- “survivor guilt” and self-destructive behavior
- inability to experience emotions or feel love for others
- avoidance of close relationships for fear of being left again
- feeling overwhelmed by emotions
- feeling that there is no future
- problems with drug or alcohol abuse
- irritability or outbursts of anger
- difficulty in concentrating on your work, interfering with performance
- inability to relax
- being easily startled
- continued physical symptoms whenever you are reminded of the death

Fitzgerald, Helen. *The Mourning Handbook*. Simon and Shuster, 1994



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## Issues Related to Sudden Death

1. Leaves survivors with a sense of unreality
2. Increases feelings of guilt; "If only I had..."
3. Intensifies the need to blame
4. Involves legal and medical authorities
5. Causes survivors to feel helpless
6. Leaves unfinished business
7. Involves an increased need to understand



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## Helping the Family: At the Hospital or the Morgue

- Have a member of the department drive the family to the hospital or morgue and stay for as long as necessary
- Work with the hospital staff to secure a private room where the family can gather. This should be separate from the general waiting area, if possible.
- Assist the family in dealing with hospital staff.
- Work with the family to arrange a plan for dealing with the media. The family may wish to have a member of the department speak for them.
- In cases of extended hospitalization, offer to assist with day-to-day tasks such as home maintenance, arranging childcare, or bringing meals and other necessities to the family.
- If the firefighter is taken to a specialized hospital out of the local area, assist with this process. Consider asking another department close to that hospital to assist you in supporting the family while the firefighter remains hospitalized. This is not solely a function of the department of firefighters. Church members, friends, or other family members may desire to help or assist.
- Encourage the family to spend time with the firefighter, even if he has already died. It is very important to many family members to see the loved one's body.
- If the firefighter's body is badly burned or disfigured, help prepare the family members for what they will see. Always allow family members to make the decision whether or not to view the body.
- Have someone available to drive the family home from the hospital after the death. Offer to stay with the family at the house or arrange for someone to stay at the house or with the family.



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## Helping the Family: From Time of Death Through the Funeral

- Contact the Department of Justice to notify them of the death. This will begin the process of reviewing eligibility for the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.
- Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to notify them of the death. This will assure the beginning of emotional support for both the family and the department.
- Work with the family in planning the funeral. Remember that the family's wishes always come first. If they want a private funeral, the department can still hold a memorial service if the family will allow.
- If there are children in the family, consider creating a special role for them, such as riding on the fire truck in the funeral procession. (Be sure to ask the parent before this idea is presented to the children!)
- Offer to assist with lodging or transportation for out of town relatives and friends.
- Offer to have a member of the department stay with the family prior to the funeral. In smaller department, consider rotating people as needed in order to maintain a department presence with the family. Church members, friends, other family members may desire to help or assist.
- Have someone available for tasks such as answering the phone, driving the family to the funeral home to make arrangements, or running to the grocery store.
- Help coordinate household duties such as food preparation, cleaning, and childcare.
- If donations are collected for the family, set up a bank account to deposit these funds at a location approved by the family.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement officials to make routine checks of residence/neighborhood.



## Helping the Family: Ongoing Support

- Follow through with all steps necessary to secure benefits for the family. The process is often lengthy, so keep the family updated about this.
- Continue to invite the family to department events.
- Remember that some events, such as holidays and the anniversary of the date of death, may be especially difficult for the family. Even families who seem to be doing well may need extra support and contact during these times.
- Continue to talk with the family about your memories of the firefighter. Most families want to hear their loved one's name and hear what others remember about him or her, even if it is emotionally difficult.
- Consider creating some kind of tribute to the fallen firefighter to present to the family. This could be a local memorial, a video tribute, a scrapbook, or a scholarship in the firefighter's name. Prepare a tribute that is fitting for your firefighter.
- Provide information on the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Survivor Support Network (301) 447-1365.



## Line-of-Duty Death Resources for Fire Departments

The Foundation has compiled the following list of resources based upon recommendations from department and grief specialists. We will continue to add resources to this list, which also appears on our Web site, [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org).

### Publications

- ***National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, Taking Care of Our Own: A Fire Chief's Guide to Preparing for a Line-of-Duty Death;***  
Contact: 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, MD 21727; (301) 447-1365
- ***Chaplain's Manual: Fire Department Funerals and Serving Those Who Serve: Beginning a Fire Department Chaplaincy Program;***  
Federation of Fire Chaplains, 1994  
Contact: Federation of Fire Chaplains, Route 1, Box 155B, Clifton, TX 76634; (254) 622-8514
- ***Critical Incident Family Support Journal;*** Seminole County, Florida  
EMS Academy Foundation  
Contact: P.O. Box 951562, Lake Mary, FL 32795-1562; (407) 323-2500
- ***Final Farewell to a Fallen Firefighter: A Basic Fire Department Funeral Protocol;*** *Fire Engineering* magazine, 1993  
Contact: *Fire Engineering* magazine at [www.fire-eng.com](http://www.fire-eng.com)
- ***For Those Who Gave So Much: Planning, Preparation, and Officiation of Funerals and Memorial Services for Public Safety Officers;*** Dwaine Booth, 1993  
Contact: Booth/Taylor Publishing at [www.homel.gte.net/dbooth/order/htm](http://www.homel.gte.net/dbooth/order/htm)
- ***Guide for Investigation of a Line-of-Duty Death;*** International Association of Fire Chiefs  
Contact: IAFC at [www.ichiefs.org/publications](http://www.ichiefs.org/publications).
- ***A Guide to Help the Fire Service Prepare for Line-of-Duty Death;*** Paul J. Antonellis  
Contact: Order online at [www.fire-police-ems.com/books/bg9500.htm](http://www.fire-police-ems.com/books/bg9500.htm)
- ***An Honorable Farewell;*** Warren L. James, *Fire Chief* magazine, October 1998  
Contact: *Fire Chief* magazine at [www.firechief.com/bodyhome/htm](http://www.firechief.com/bodyhome/htm)



- ***Line-of-Duty Deaths and Their Effects on Co-Workers and Their Families***; Richard Gist and Vickie Harris Taylor, 1991
- ***A Procedural Guide in the Event of Death in the Line of Duty of a Member of the Volunteer Fire Service***; National Volunteer Fire Council; 1989  
Contact: NVFC at [www.nvfc.org](http://www.nvfc.org)
- ***Funeral Procedures for Firefighters: A Resource Manual***; National Volunteer Fire Council; 1992  
Contact: NVFC at [www.nvfc.org/funeral.htm](http://www.nvfc.org/funeral.htm)
- ***Support Services to Surviving Families of Line-of-Duty Death: A Public Safety Agency Handbook***; Concerns of Police Survivors; 1990  
Contact: Concerns of Police Survivors at [www.nationalcops.org/forms/htm](http://www.nationalcops.org/forms/htm)

## Web Sites

*Firehouse* magazine

[www.firehouse.com](http://www.firehouse.com)

Provides immediate information on incidents and hosts a forum on Line-of-Duty Death issues.

*United States Fire Administration*

[www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

Provides listing of firefighter deaths. Current year listings only reflect information USFA has received and do not necessarily reflect line-of-duty deaths that will meet criteria for inclusion on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial.



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## **National Grief Support Groups**

Following is a list of resources that your fallen firefighter's family may find helpful.

### **General Sites**

#### **Grief and Healing Discussion Page**

A grief-related site with a message board providing opportunities to give and receive help with other grieving people. Especially good resources for grieving men.

[www.webhealing.com](http://www.webhealing.com)

#### **Journey of Hearts: A Healing Place in Cyberspace**

Provides resources and support for the unique issues of both new and long-term grief.

[www.journeyofhearts.org/](http://www.journeyofhearts.org/)

#### **MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving)**

Information regarding victims rights and advocacy. Provides support groups.

511 East John Carpenter Freeway, Suite 100

Irving, TX 75062

(800) 438-MADD

[www.madd.org](http://www.madd.org)

#### **Growth House Family Links**

Excellent links to other family grief-related sites.

[www.growthhouse.org/famgrief.html](http://www.growthhouse.org/famgrief.html)

## **Finding Support Services**

#### **American Association of Pastoral Counselors**

Clergy who have been trained and are experienced in helping people work through loss.

9504A Lee Highway

Fairfax, VA 22031-2302

(703) 385-6967

[www.aapc.org](http://www.aapc.org)



**Angels of Valor from Grief Recovery Online**

Chat room specifically for family members of those killed in the line of duty, including fire fighting, law enforcement, and military; the facilitators of this site are also survivors.

[www.groww.com](http://www.groww.com)

**Griefnet**

An extremely comprehensive site that has good sources for literature as well as many specialized support groups, memorials and chat rooms.

[www.rivendell.org](http://www.rivendell.org)

**National Hospice Organization**

Nationwide and local hospice referrals, includes a state-by-state listing of hospices

(800) 658-8898

[www.nho.org](http://www.nho.org)

**AARP Grief Program**

State-by-state listing of support groups for widows and widowers.

[www.aarp.org/statepages/](http://www.aarp.org/statepages/)

**Bereavement & Hospice Support Netline**

State-by-state listing of support groups.

[www.ubalt.edu/www/bereavement/states.htm](http://www.ubalt.edu/www/bereavement/states.htm)

**Online Memorials**

**Emergency Services Memorial Sites**

Links to online memorial sites.

[www.firefighting.com/911/911mem/esmem1e/htm](http://www.firefighting.com/911/911mem/esmem1e/htm)

**Firefighter Home Page Memorial**

Provides links to memorial sites.

[www.idcnet.com/~ffhp/mem.html](http://www.idcnet.com/~ffhp/mem.html)

**Memorial Hall**

Offers space to post memorials to fallen firefighters.

Links to fire, police, and EMS memorial sites on the web.

[www.parlorcity.com/trump/mem2.htm](http://www.parlorcity.com/trump/mem2.htm)



**National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Memory Wall**

Site for families and friends of fallen firefighters to post tributes.  
[www.firehero.org/memory.htm](http://www.firehero.org/memory.htm)

**The Virtual Memorial Garden**

Bulletin board for posting memorials to loved ones.  
[www.catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg](http://www.catless.ncl.ac.uk/vmg)

**Virtual Memorials**

Site which provides space for and assistance with developing memorial pages for loved ones, including photographs and graphics.  
[www.virtual-memorials.com](http://www.virtual-memorials.com)

**For Widowed Spouses**

**Widowed Persons Service**

Referral information, a public education program for family adjustment, counseling for financial and legal affairs. Survivor to survivor support offered.  
AARP  
601 E Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20049  
(202) 434-2260  
[www.seniors-site.com/widow/wps.html](http://www.seniors-site.com/widow/wps.html)

**WidowNet**

Site by and for widows and widowers. Focus on self-help and helping one another.  
[www.fortnet.org/WidowNet/index.html](http://www.fortnet.org/WidowNet/index.html)

**AARP Grief Programs**

State-by-state listings of support groups for widows and widowers.  
[www.aarp.org/statepages/](http://www.aarp.org/statepages/)



## **For Parents**

### **Compassionate Friends**

An international support group for bereaved parents and siblings. Provides support, referral and information.

P.O. Box 3696, Oak Brook, IL 60522-3696

(630) 990-0246

[www.compassionatefriends.org](http://www.compassionatefriends.org)

### **Parents of Murdered Children (POMC)**

100 East Eighth, Room B-41

Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

[www.pomc.com](http://www.pomc.com)

### **Penparents: The International Support Network for Grieving Parents**

Provides peer support, pen pal network with other grieving parents, as well as matches with parents in similar circumstances.

[www.penparents.org](http://www.penparents.org)

### **Invincible Summer**

Site for grieving parents who have no surviving children.

[www.drizzle.com/~hall/invsum](http://www.drizzle.com/~hall/invsum)

## **For Teens and Kids**

### **A Child's Heart**

Site only for children and teens.

[www.death-dying.com/child/](http://www.death-dying.com/child/)

### **The Dougy Center**

The Dougy Center provides bereavement services to children and teens in the Portland, Ore. area. Lists Network Programs across the country for grieving children and teens.

[www.dougy.org/Groups.htm](http://www.dougy.org/Groups.htm)

### **Julie's Place**

Site for young people ages 6-18 who have lost a sibling. Includes separate sections for children (ages 6 -12), teens (ages 13-18), and parents.

[www.juliesplace.com/](http://www.juliesplace.com/)



**Kidsaid**

Site for children and teens. Includes opportunities to post stories, questions, artwork, and a message board. Sponsored by GriefNet.  
[www.griefnet.org/KIDSAID/welcome.html](http://www.griefnet.org/KIDSAID/welcome.html)



## National Fallen Firefighters Foundation’s Chief-to-Chief Network

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1.<br/>Network established to...</p>                                       | <p>Offer support to fire chiefs who lose a firefighter in the line of duty. Chiefs who have “been there” make up the network. They lend personal and professional support based on what they have experienced. Retired Chief Charlie Dickinson is the Foundation’s network coordinator.</p>                        |
| <p>2.<br/>Line-of-duty death occurs. Foundation gathers information on...</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Date of Incident</li> <li>• Location of Incident</li> <li>• Description of Incident</li> <li>• Chief’s Name</li> <li>• Department Name</li> <li>• Phone Number</li> </ul>   |
| <p>3.<br/>NFFF matches a network chief with the “new chief” by...</p>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Type of department (career/volunteer/combined/state)</li> <li>• Size of department</li> <li>• State and region</li> <li>• Type of incident</li> <li>• Special circumstances</li> </ul>  |
| <p>4.<br/>Contact process starts when...</p>                                  | <p>Fire Chief Coordinator calls member of network and forwards pertinent information on incident. They agree on best way to provide support to the “new chief” who has lost a firefighter.</p>   |
| <p>5.<br/>“Experienced” chief contacts “new chief” to talk about...</p>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incident follow-up</li> <li>• Support for the firefighter’s family and coworkers</li> <li>• Funeral and memorial service arrangements</li> <li>• Dealing with requests for information</li> <li>• Personal feelings of loss</li> <li>• Other issues of concern</li> </ul> |



## Chief-to-Chief Network Participant Profile

### Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Information About Your Department

If your experience with a line-of-duty death occurred while you were with another department, please complete both columns:

|   | <b><u>Current Department</u></b>   | <b><u>Previous Department</u></b>  |
|---|--|--|
| Circle the one that best represents the department/agency type.   | career volunteer<br>combined state   | career volunteer<br>combined state   |
| In what state/region is the department/agency located? See list below for a list of the regions and states. |  |  |
| What is the population the department/agency serves?  | 0-9,999<br>10,000-49,999<br>50,000-99,999<br>100,000-199,999<br>200,000 and Up | 0-9,999<br>10,000-49,999<br>50,000-99,999<br>100,000-199,999<br>200,000 and Up |

**Region**

Eastern  
Great Lakes  
Missouri Valley  
New England  
Southeastern  
Southwestern  
Western

**States**

DC, DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA  
IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI  
CO, IA, KS, MO, NE, ND, SD, WY  
CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT  
AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV  
AR, LA, NM, OK, TX  
AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA





## Support for Coworkers

### Differences between...

### Grief Counseling and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

| Grief Counseling...  | Critical Incident Stress Debriefing...  |
|--|---|
| <p>Helps the survivor...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actualize the loss</li> <li>• identify and express feelings</li> <li>• live without the deceased</li> <li>• withdraw emotionally from the deceased</li> </ul>                            | <p>Assists fire service personnel to construct a shared picture of...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how the incident occurred</li> <li>• what each of them was thinking</li> <li>• what each of them was doing</li> <li>• how each individual is reacting and feeling</li> <li>• how the department is reacting</li> </ul> |
| <p>It...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provides support and understanding of normal grief behaviors</li> <li>• provides ongoing support</li> <li>• increases coping skills</li> <li>• may occur individually, in groups or by family</li> </ul> | <p>It is designed to assist firefighters and the department take concrete steps to...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• begin the recovery process</li> <li>• learn from the experience</li> <li>• honor its lost member(s)</li> <li>• rebound from challenging events</li> <li>• collectively move forward</li> </ul>         |
| <p>Counseling may be ongoing and provides more individualized attention than a group debriefing.</p>   | <p>CISD sessions usually occur once or twice.</p>   |



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## Support for Coworkers

Firefighters will experience a wide range of emotions. Remember the signs of grief we discussed earlier (Module 3, pg. 8). You may see them in your firefighters, too, especially those who were friends of the deceased firefighter.

1. Questioning and conflicting emotions will be normal reactions.
  - they may feel guilty for surviving
  - they may ask: “Did we do enough? Did we do things right? Was it my
  
2. These questions should lead to an honest look at the incident and lessons learned.
  - you should not minimize the value of a fallen firefighter’s life by saying “we would do the same thing next time...”
  
3. Grief, pain, loss, and sorrow are signs of strength, not weakness.
  - rationalizing grief away is not beneficial
  - each firefighter’s grief may be different, and that’s okay
  - respect it however it shows up
  - use an “operations” approach as a way to deal with coworker grief
  
4. Help for coworkers and their families is critical.
  - So what are some things you can do to help your firefighters after a line-of-duty death?



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## Ways to Remember Your Fallen Firefighter

### Special Tributes

- Videos
- Scrapbooks
- Photo albums
- Fundraisers or event in the firefighter's honor
- Personal tributes

### Through Web sites

- Memorial and tribute pages
- Condolences by e-mail

### Through Memorials

- National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Emmitsburg, Md.
- IAFF Memorial in Colorado Springs, Co.
- State and local memorials and ceremonies
- Local tributes
- Dedications of parks or department facilities
- Purchase of emergency equipment or fire safety devices (smoke detectors)
- Establishment of scholarships



## Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program Claims Process for Line-of Duty Deaths

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>1. Immediately after the fatality</b></p> | <p>The department must...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Notify the family.</li> <li>2. Secure the scene.</li> <li>3. Begin an investigation of the incident.</li> <li>4. Make arrangements for an autopsy.</li> <li>5. Identify a department member to serve as a liaison between the department and the PSOB office.</li> </ol> |
|---|--|

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>2. Immediately after being named the department's liaison...</b></p> | <p>The liaison must...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Call PSOB at 1-888-744-6513 or ICHIEFS at 703-273-0911 if there is no answer.</li> <li>2. Provide accurate, up-to-date information including these items:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire department name and address.</li> <li>• Liaison's name.</li> <li>• Phone numbers for the department and liaison.</li> <li>• A fax number or mailing address so PSOB can send the Death Benefits Questionnaire.</li> <li>• Deceased firefighter's name.</li> <li>• Date of the incident and death.</li> <li>• A brief description of the incident.</li> </ul> </li> </ol> <p><b>Relay the information very carefully and relay only what you know. Do not speculate on the cause of death if you do not know it.</b></p> |
|--|--|

If you need to notify PSOB on an evening or a weekend, leave a message. Be sure to include all the above information.



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>3. PSOB responds.</p>   | <p>PSOB will fax or mail its Death Benefits Questionnaire to the department liaison as soon as possible after receiving the call.</p>   |
| <p>4. The department liaison completes the Death Benefits Questionnaire.</p> | <p>The liaison must complete and return the Questionnaire to PSOB immediately. This information is vital. In describing the incident, the liaison needs to provide as much detail as possible <b>but not speculate</b> if the cause of death is not known.</p>  |
| <p>5. PSOB then sends a claims package to the department liaison.</p>        | <p>This package includes three items:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. A guidance letter explaining claim documentation requirements.</li> <li>2. A form, <i>Report of Public Safety Officer's Death</i>, that the department must complete and the head of agency must sign.</li> <li>3. A form, <i>Claim for Death Benefit</i>, that the surviving spouse, children or parents must complete and sign.</li> </ol>  |
| <p>6. The department liaison needs to...</p>                                 | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete the form, <i>Report of Public Safety Officer's Death</i>.</li> <li>2. Make sure the family gets the other form, <i>Claim for Death Benefit</i>.</li> <li>3. Offer assistance to the family in completing the form. Explain to the family that PSOB will return all the required original documents only if requested (birth certificate, marriage licenses, divorce decrees, etc.).</li> <li>4. Assure that the family provides a certified death notice, not a copy.</li> <li>5. Submit both completed forms and all supporting documents to PSOB as soon as possible.</li> </ol> |
| <p>7. The PSOB specialist receives the claim package and...</p>              | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Reviews the package and prepares a recommendation.</li> <li>2. Contacts the department liaison if further information is needed.</li> <li>3. Submits unresolved medical questions to the Armed Forces Institute of Pathology.</li> <li>4. Submits written recommendations to the Department of Justice's Office of General</li> </ol>   |



|  |                     |
|--|---------------------|
|  | Counsel for review. |
|--|---------------------|

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 8. If the General Counsel requests more information... | The PSOB Specialist will:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Contact with department for more information.</li><li>2. Meet with General Counsel staff to review any new information provided and reach a decision.</li></ol> |
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|   |  |
|---|--|
| 9. If the General Counsel approves the claim... | The PSOB Specialist will:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Send a letter to the next-of-kin notifying them of the approval of the claim.</li><li>2. Send a check to the eligible next-of-kin.</li></ol> |
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| 10. If the General Counsel denies the claim... | The PSOB Specialist will:<br><ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Send a letter to the next-of-kin notifying them of the denial of the claim.</li><li>2. Provide more information on the appeals process.</li></ol> |
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**If you have any questions at any time, please call PSOB at (888) 744-6513**



# Bureau of Justice Assistance Fact Sheet

## Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program

### History

The Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Act (42 U.S.C. 3796, et seq.) was enacted in 1976 to assist in the recruitment and retention of law enforcement officers and firefighters. Specifically, Congress was concerned that the hazards inherent in law enforcement and fire suppression and the low level of state and local death benefits might discourage qualified individuals from seeking careers in these fields, thus hampering the ability of communities to provide for public safety. The PSOB Act was designed to offer peace of mind to men and women seeking careers in public safety and to make a strong statement about the value American society places on the contributions of those who serve their communities in potentially dangerous circumstances.

The resultant PSOB Program, which is administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), presents a unique opportunity for the U.S. Department of Justice; federal, state, and local public safety agencies; and national public safety organizations to become involved in promoting the protection of public safety officers before tragedies occur. Each year, the PSOB Program receives substantial information about line-of-duty deaths that is used to enhance public safety officer training. The PSOB Program also encourages public safety agencies to adopt model policies that can help guide an agency through the tragic event of a line-of-duty death.

### PSOB Program Benefits

The PSOB Program provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths are the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty. The benefit was increased from \$50,000 to \$100,000 for deaths occurring on or after June 1, 1988. Since October 15, 1988, the benefit has been adjusted each year on October 1 to reflect the percentage of change in the Consumer Price Index. For fiscal year 2000, the benefit is \$151,635.

The PSOB Program provides the same benefit to public safety officers who have been permanently and totally disabled by a catastrophic personal injury sustained in the line of duty if that injury permanently prevents the officer from performing *any* gainful work. Medical retirement for a line of duty disability does not, in and of itself, establish eligibility for PSOB benefits.



Since 1977, on average, the PSOB Program has received 275 benefit claims each year for line-of-duty deaths of public safety officers. POSB Program staff respond rapidly and with sensitivity to requests for assistance from claimants and public safety agencies. They also provide moral support and, when necessary, referrals to organization such as Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF), which can provide long-term support for surviving family members and coworkers of deceased public safety officers.



### **PSOB Service Standards Commitment**

The mission of the PSOB staff is to assist public safety officers, their agencies, and their families before, during, and after a tragedy occurs. Three core values guide our daily operations and measure our performance. They are:

- We will respond rapidly and accurately to PSOB death and disability benefits claims.
- We will be humane in our support of public safety officers, their agencies, and their families.
- We will seek and pursue opportunities to expand our assistance to the public safety field.

To improve our response time, we continuously assess our allocation of staff and organizational processes. We will respond to the public safety field within 2 weeks once an eligible death benefits case is complete, within 4 weeks once an ineligible death benefits case is complete, and within 6 weeks once a disability case is complete. To ensure accuracy, we will use medicolegal experts and independent legal analyses from outside the PSOB Program.

To provide our services in the most sensitive and professional manner, PSOB staff receive training on key issues associated with grief, critical incident stress, and posttraumatic stress disorder. We also solicit and use information provided to us on the tone and impact of our verbal and written communication with the public safety field.

One example of the PSOB Program giving more to the field is a series of regional training sessions conducted to help law enforcement agencies prepare for the loss of an officer. It is essential that all public safety agencies be prepared to effectively assist the family, fellow officers, and the community to move forward in the aftermath of a tragedy.

Our commitment to support the public safety community has never been stronger, and it will continue to grow.



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## PSOB Program Effective Dates

The effective dates for PSOB Program benefits are as follows:

### Death Benefits

- State and local law enforcement officers and firefighters are covered for line-of-duty deaths occurring on or after September 29, 1976.
- Federal law enforcement officers and firefighters are covered for line-of-duty deaths occurring on or after October 12, 1984.
- Members of federal, state, and local public rescue squads and ambulance crews are covered for line-of-duty deaths occurring on or after October 15, 1986.

### Disability Benefits

Federal, state, and local law enforcement officers, firefighters, and member of public rescue squads and ambulance crews are covered for catastrophic personal injuries sustained on or after November 29, 1990. The public safety officer must be separated from his or her employing agency for medical reasons, and must be receiving the maximum allowable disability compensation from his or her jurisdiction, in order to initiate a claim for PSOB disability benefits. Eligible officers may include persons who are comatose, in a persistent vegetative state, or quadriplegic.

### Public Safety Officers Eligible for PSOB Program Benefits

Under the PSOB Program, a *public safety officer* is a person serving a *public agency* in an official capacity, with or without compensation, as a law enforcement officer, firefighter, or member of a public rescue squad or ambulance crew. *Law enforcement officers* include, but are not limited to, police, corrections, probation, parole, and judicial officers. *Volunteer firefighters* and *members of volunteer rescue squads and ambulance crews* are covered under the program if they are officially recognized or designated members of legally organized volunteer fire departments, rescue squads, or ambulance crews.

A *public agency* is defined as the United States; any U.S. state; the District of Columbia; the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico; any U.S. territory or possession; any unit of local government; any combination of such states or units; and any department, agency, or instrumentality of the foregoing. To be eligible for benefits, a public safety officer's death or total and permanent disability must

result from injuries sustained in the line of duty. *Line of duty* is defined in the PSOB regulations (28 CFR 32) as any action that the public safety officer whose



primary function is crime control or reductions, enforcement of the criminal law, or suppression of fires is authorized or obligated by law, rule, regulation, or condition of employment or service to perform. Other public safety officers—whose primary function is not law enforcement or fire suppression—must be engaged in their *authorized* law enforcement, fire suppression, rescue squad, or ambulance duties when the fatal or disabling injury is sustained.

### **Survivors Eligible for Program Death Benefits**

Once BJA approves a claim for death benefits, the benefit will be paid to eligible survivors in a lump sum, as follows:

- *If there are no surviving children of the deceased officer*, to the surviving spouse.
- *If there is a surviving child or children and a surviving spouse*, one-half to the child or to the children in equal shares and one-half to the surviving spouse.
- *If there is no surviving spouse*, to the child or in equal shares to the children.
- *If none of the above apply*, to the parent or in equal shares to the parents.

Under the PSOB Act, *child* is defined as any natural child who was born before or after the death of the public safety officer, or who is an adopted child or stepchild of the deceased public safety officer. At the time of death the *child* must be 18 years of age or younger; or 19-22 years of age and pursuing a full-time course of study or training, if the child has not already completed 4 years of education beyond high school; or 19 years or older and incapable of self-support due to a physical or mental disability.

For PSOB Program benefits to be paid, a public safety officer must be survived by an eligible survivor; public safety officers cannot predesignate their beneficiaries.

### **PSOB Program Limitations and Exclusions**

No PSOB Program benefit can be paid:

- If the death or permanent and total disability was caused by the intentional misconduct of the public safety officer or if the officer intended to bring about his or her own death or permanent and total disability.
- If the public safety officer was voluntarily intoxicated at the time of death or permanent and total disability.
- If the public safety officer was performing his or her duties in a grossly negligent manner at the time of death or permanent and total disability.



- To a claimant whose actions were a substantial contributing factor to the death of the public safety officer.
- To non-civilian members of the military serving as law enforcement officers, firefighters, or rescue squad or ambulance crew members, or to any of their survivors.

PSOB benefits do not cover death or permanent and total disability resulting from stress; strain; occupational illness; or a chronic, progressive, or congenital disease (such as heart or pulmonary disease), unless there is a traumatic injury that is a substantial contributing factor in the death or permanent and total disability. Medical proof of the traumatic injury (such as a blood test for carbon monoxide poisoning) may be necessary for coverage in these cases.

## Reduction of Benefits

The PSOB Program benefit is reduced by certain payments made under the District of Columbia Code and may itself reduce benefits under Section 8191 of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act. However, state and local benefits must not be reduced by benefits received under the PSOB Act, and the PSOB benefit is not reduced by any benefit received at the state or local level.

## Interim Payment

If BJA determines an urgent claimant need before the final action of paying a death benefit, an interim benefit payment not exceeding \$3,000 may be made to the eligible survivor(s) if it is probable that the death is compensable.

## Attachment and Tax Exemption

PSOB death and disability benefits are not subject to execution for attachment by creditors. The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has ruled that the benefit is not subject to federal income tax (IRS Ruling No. 77-235, IRS 1977-28) or to federal estate tax (IRS Ruling No. 79-397).

## Attorneys' Fees

The PSOB Act authorizes BJA to establish the maximum fee that may be charged for services rendered to the claimant by another party in connection with any PSOB claim filed with BJA. Contracts for a stipulated fee and contingent fee arrangements are prohibited by PSOB regulations (28 CFR 32.22 (b)). BJA assumes no responsibility for payment of claimant attorney fees (28 CFR 32.22(d)).



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## Filing a Claim

Eligible survivors or disability claimants may file claims directly with BJA or through the public safety agency, organization, or unit in which the public safety officer served. In most cases, the public safety agency provides BJA with sufficient information to determine whether the circumstances of the death or permanent and total disability support a benefit payment. The public safety agency prepares a Report of Public Safety Officer's Death or Permanent and Total Disability Claim Form to accompany the claim for death benefits completed by the eligible survivor(s) or, in the case of disability claims, the prerequisite disability certification package completed by the injured officer. BJA will determine whether and to whom a benefit should be paid.

## For Further Information

For more information about the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program or to share your observations and recommendations, please contact:

### U.S. Department of Justice Response Center

1-800-421-6770 or 202-307-1480

Response Center staff are available Monday through Friday, 9 a.m.-5 p.m. eastern time.

### Bureau of Justice Assistance

Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program

810 Seventh Street, NW

Washington, DC 20531

Toll Free: 1-888-SIGNAL13 (744-6513)

Fax: 202-307-3373

World Wide Web: [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA/)

### Bureau of Justice Assistance Clearinghouse

P.O. Box 6000

Rockville, MD 20849-6000

1-800-688-4252

Fax: 301-519-5212

E-mail: [look@ncjrs.aspensys.com](mailto:look@ncjrs.aspensys.com)



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## Fire Service Guide Series: Line-of-Duty Death

*Example procedure from State of New York*

### Introduction

The death of a fellow firefighter is often a difficult time for the entire department. Many details and arrangements need to be addressed in a fairly short period of time. One major item which is often overlooked is the completion of necessary state and federal claim forms assuring the deceased member's family receives the various benefits afforded to them. It is vital that the fire department take the responsibility for seeing that this is cared for.

### Line-of-Duty Death Committee

To prepare for such an occurrence, a fire department should appoint one member or a select committee to provide assistance completing the necessary claim forms. They should be familiar with the applicable state and federal statutes so, in the event of a firefighter death, benefits can be properly and punctually obtained. There should be a working knowledge of the various insurance policies held by the department regarding coverage and exclusions, application procedures and other provisions. Procedures outlined by the department's insurance carrier should also be obtained.

Numerous department procedures must be established to address tasks needed to be dealt with after a line-of-duty death, including:

- Prompt and punctual filing of all claim forms and benefit claims;
- Procedures for fire department funeral allowing for religious considerations and family wishes; should provide assistance to families and funeral director, if desired, to provide for the smoothest operation. (Fire department chaplains have a major role in this task.);
- Procedures for notifying proper authorities and news media in the event of a line-of-duty death;
- Procedures for notifying next of kin; provide assistance for family as requested;
- Securing permission from family for autopsy and the release of the report for filing purposes when and where required; and
- Obtaining sources of information of all official records and reports necessary for filing claims.



Many fire department activities are not covered unless members are “authorized” or “ordered” by the chief to participate. In some cases, the absence of such authorization may jeopardize the receipt of applicable benefits. The department chief should assure prior authorization is in place so this will not occur. Accurate records concerning which members participated in various activities is also crucial.

## Line-of-Duty Death Occurrence

Despite the emotional upset accompanying this event, the department must take immediate steps to collect facts, ensure the preservation of necessary records, notify the family and appropriate authorities and in general, protect the interests of the deceased member and member’s family.

Numerous items need to be addressed at the time of the incident and immediately thereafter. The incident may take on of the following forms:

- death at the scene;
- dead on arrival at hospital;
- alive on arrival, but later expires; or
- injuries or distress not detected at scene and member dies later, possibly at home or fire station.

In some cases, steps must be taken to ensure that cause and death is accurately reported. An autopsy should be requested, as well as a toxicological examination with a test for specific levels of carbon monoxide (CO) in the blood expressed in an exact percent.

Testing is absolutely crucial in the event of a member’s collapse at or following an incident without a physical injury present. In the event a toxicology test was not performed and cannot be performed due to lack of blood samples, etc., affidavits from the fire department or investigating medical examiner stating such facts and explaining why tests were not conducted are necessary.

The required tests can be satisfied by utilizing the postmortem protocol for fire victims. This series of tests will determine the various factors necessary for submission of the claims. Additional information concerning this protocol can be obtained from the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, (518) 474-6746.

Emphasize the importance of the percent level as opposed to generalities, such as CO present or “trace of CO,” etc. This is crucial especially in cardiac-related



cases. In these cases, it is necessary to prove a traumatic injury existed by the blood carbon monoxide level. Blood tests for carbon monoxide, as well as other materials, must give the exact level of product saturation, not merely the presence, such as “carbon monoxide less than 10 percent.” For example, a member is admitted with a broken leg but subsequently suffers a heart attack brought about by low level smoke inhalation which did not produce an obvious symptom at the scene. The broken leg certainly was not the cause of death, but, if a CO level of 15 percent or more (10 percent for non-smokers) is detected on admission, that will be considered a “physical injury” which resulted in death under the Public Safety Officer’s Benefit Law. DO NOT make any statement indicating that “stress,” “strain,” or “exertion” was a contributing factor in the incident as this will lead to denial of benefits.

It is recommended that any equipment involved in a firefighter incident (protection gear, SCBA, etc.) be impounded and secured. Additional information, such as communication, tapes and records, should also be maintained. While this information is not a part of the PSOB guidelines, it may assist in the benefit claim submission.

## Statements

Restraint is the key word. This is not intended to suppress information, but rather to suppress incorrect and unnecessary opinions. Facts, as they are known, should be given to persons and/or agencies as needed to perform their functions. Opinions and speculation based on indirect evidence should be identified as such rather than stated as fact. If facts are not known, this should be clearly stated. If circumstantial evidence is present, give that information, not your conclusion as to what the circumstantial evidence means.

## Agencies to Notify

The following organizations should be notified in the event of a line-of-duty death. These groups can provide assistance and guidance throughout this process.

1. Fire Investigative Unit. Notify Immediately. NOTE: If the member is moved from the area of injury, be sure to indicate the area and secure the scene for police and/or fire investigation.
2. Governing body of fire department and Chief Executive of Municipality.
3. County fire coordinator’s office. The coordinator can provide assistance in a number of areas.



4. Office of fire prevention and control as well as the local and state fire marshals. These offices can provide assistance in completing forms and explaining procedures.
5. Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program, Washington, DC (by phone during business day). Ask for "Program Planning Specialist" at (202) 724-7620 or by mail to: US Department of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program, Washington, DC 20531.
6. Insurance Companies. If you have supplementary insurance, notify these companies.
7. Police department having jurisdiction over serious crimes. Notify immediately.
8. Notify your attorney or obtain one.
9. For career personnel;
  - Notify the IAFF Secretary/Treasurer. Telephone (202) 872-8484. To request help, call immediately.
  - Notify the US Department of Justice. Telephone (202) 724-7620 to obtain forms.
  - Notify and alert your IAFF District Vice President, State District Vice President and the State Office.
  - Retirement System.
10. For career and volunteer personnel: Telephone the Worker's Compensation Board's local office. They will take information, assign a case number and advise which form to file.
11. The United States Fire Administration and the National Fire Academy have also requested telephone notification in the event of a firefighter line-of-duty death so the flags over the National Fallen Firefighter's Memorial may be lowered in respect. Notification may be made by contacting the Office of Fire Prevention and Control, 162 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12231; (518) 474-6746.



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## Available Benefits

Listed below are some of the death benefit programs available to fire service personnel and a description of their provisions. NOTE: The provisions contained within this section may change periodically. It is important for fire service personnel to be aware of any changes which may occur.

### CAREER AND VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL

#### Federal Public Safety Officers Death Benefit:

This program provides for \$100,000 basic death benefit to the dependants of a career or volunteer firefighter who dies in the line of duty. This benefit amount also incorporates a cost of living escalator which is tied to the consumer price index. On October 1<sup>st</sup> of each year, the basic benefit will increase the increase in the consumer price index. After the PSOB has been contacted initially (see "Agencies to Notify"), it will send forms and instructions for completing them. The instructions are simple and direct but must be followed or benefits may be delayed. Please read all instructions and notes, in particular, those on the submission of supportive documents.

1. Official documents submitted in support of the Claim for Death Benefits and/or the Report of Public Safety Officers' Death must be certified by the documents' official custodian. The custodian must affirm the document in question is a true and exact copy of the official record. Additionally, if the certifying official's original signature is not accompanied by the raised seal of his agency, a notary public seal and signature are necessary for certification.
2. Statements by individuals submitted in support of a claim must be in the form of an affidavit signed by the person making the statement and witnessed by a notary public.
3. Copies of documents or affidavits are acceptable providing they contain an original seal and signature of both the certifying official and the notary public. Copies of a certified document (e.g., seals and signature are copied) are not acceptable.
4. The department should assist the family in preparing its claim to ensure that all materials are included and properly certified. It is recommended that both the family's and the department's claim materials be submitted as one package to the following address: Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program, Office of the Comptroller, Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, 633 Indiana Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20531. It



needs to be emphasized that every document requested must be provided to support a claim and that each of these documents must be an original or certified copy (e.g., raised seal and certifying officer's original signature). If a required document is not certified the officer's benefits will be significantly delayed.

### Local Insurance Policies

Many Municipalities, fire departments, firefighter unions or benevolent associations may carry additional insurance policies over and above any local, state or federal benefits. These policies will vary greatly in their benefit packages as well as their claim procedures. It is important for all affected organizations to be aware of their individual policies, the benefits available through these policies and the proper procedure for filing a claim.

### General Municipal Law, Section 20 (A)

Section 205 (A) of the General Municipal Law provides for a \$1,000 injury settlement or a \$5,000 death settlement to the survivors of an injured or a deceased firefighter. This applies if the firefighter was injured or killed as a direct or indirect result of neglect, omission, willful or culpable negligence of any person or persons who fail to comply with any local, state or federal statutes, ordinances, rules, orders or requirements. This benefit provision is in addition to any other available benefits and is paid by the person or persons who failed to comply with the statute.

### Student Financial Aid

In addition to the death benefits outlined, the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation has a program of student financial aid for children of deceased firefighters. In order to be eligible, the parent must have been a firefighter (career or volunteer) of New York State or its municipalities and died as a result of injuries sustained in the line of duty. Additional qualifications placed upon the recipient include:

- enrolled full-time in an approved post-secondary educational program in New York State;
- be a New York State resident at the start of the term for which payment is sought;
- meet one of the US citizenship requirements;
- matriculate in an approved educational program; and
- be in good academic standing.

The amount of the award is \$450 per year for up to four years of undergraduate study or five years of undergraduate study in an approved five-year baccalaureate program. Two forms need to be filed for this program: a "Student Payment Application" and a "Child of Police Officer--Firefighter Award" supplement. Copies can be obtained from: the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation, Albany, New York 12255.



## Volunteer Personnel

This program is administered by the New York State Worker's Compensation Board while the benefits are paid by the local political subdivision or its insurance carrier.

Death benefits, in most cases, consist of a funeral benefit, a lump sum death benefit and weekly death benefits. The Worker's Compensation Board provides a pamphlet explaining the benefits in detail.

As previously mentioned, the first step is to contact the Worker's Compensation Board district office for your area. They can provide guidance and assistance. District offices and the counties they serve are listed on the VF forms.

### VFBL Forms

There are four forms utilized for payment of benefits:

VF-1: Serves as a notice to the liable political subdivision of a volunteer firefighter's injury or death. This form must be filed within 90 days after the date of death or injury. Particular attention should be paid to the instructions at the top of the form, stating with whom it is to be filed.

VF-2: Serves as political subdivision's report of injury of a volunteer firefighter to New York State Worker's Compensation Board. This report shall be filed within 10 days. Remember that a copy should be sent to the insurance carrier or county plan of self-insurance for the political subdivision.

VF-3 Serves as volunteer firefighter's claim for benefits. This form shall be filed as soon as possible after the injury is incurred but no later than two years from date of injury. A copy should be submitted to the liable political subdivision. A medical report should also accompany this form.

VF-62: Claim for volunteer firefighter's benefits in death case. This form must also be submitted in the event of a death case. Important items that need to be included with this form or brought to the first hearing include:

- copy of medical report from doctor who treated the deceased;
- proof of relationship between deceased and the claimant, such as birth certificates, marriage certificates, adoption papers, etc.;
- death certificate; and
- itemized funeral bill.

This form must be filed with the Worker's Compensation Board and the liable political subdivision within two years after death.

One important item to remember is that persons eligible to claim death benefits must meet one of the following criteria:

- widow/widower;
- children under the age of 18 at time of death;



- children of any age who are totally blind or physically disabled and whose disability is total and permanent;
- grandchildren, brothers or sisters of the deceased who were under the age of 18 at the time of death and were wholly or partially dependent on deceased for support;
- wholly or partially dependent parents or grandparents; and
- dependent children or grandchildren under 25 years of age who are full-time students.

Lastly, each claimant must file a separate claim. Only one claim need be filed by a spouse and/or children under 18 years of age or under 25 years of age enrolled as a full-time student

## Career Personnel

### GENERAL MUNICIPAL LAW

Section 208 (b) of the General Municipal Law provides for a death benefit which is paid by the municipality and consists of a lump sum payment equivalent to the annual salary during the year preceding his/her death or the year preceding his/her injuries, whichever is greater, and \$1,000 for each child of the deceased under 18 on the date of death. The death benefit is payable to the widow/widower or her/his children under 18.

Section 208 (c) of the General Municipal Law further allows, in some cases, that the benefit be paid to the firefighter's father or mother. Consultation with this particular section of the law is recommended.

The claim form should be submitted to the chief fiscal officer of the municipality or a form supplied and prescribed by him. There is a 30 day time limit on submission of this form, however, certain extenuating circumstances allow for the form submission after this period of time. This is also addressed in the law.

### NEW YORK STATE RETIREMENT LAW

Notify the Retirement System by sending a copy of the death certificate, along with the name and retirement number of the individual.

Accidental death guarantees the widow/widower full pay under the Retirement System. Two sections of the Retirement Law cover line-of-duty death:

1. Accidental death covers 50 percent of the individual's final year salary. If there is compensation coverage it will pay the maximum of \$215 per week. This amount will be subtracted from the 50 percent coverage under this section.
2. The supplemental section of the Retirement Law covering the line of duty accidental deaths also pays 50 percent of the final year salary. This section is affected by any social security benefits for which the benefactor



is qualified. If the widow/widower is 60 years of age, she/he would qualify for a widow's/widower's pension. This amount would be subtracted from the 50 percent of the retirement supplemental coverage. If there is no compensation benefits and the widow/widower is under 60 years of age, the Retirement System will pay full salary of the final year of the individual from the date of death back 12 months.

**SUMMARY**

At the time of a line-of-duty death, all members of the department feel a great loss. But no matter how difficult, the department must be aware of its responsibility to the deceased and his/her family to assure the family's security for the years to come.

The following is a listing of agencies and contacts where the necessary claim forms may be obtained. Additional information concerning local insurance policies should be obtained through the insurance company or carrier.

**CAREER AND VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL**

**Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program**

U.S. Department of Justice  
Law Enforcement Assistance Administration  
Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program  
623 Indiana Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20531  
(202) 724-7620 (ask for Program Planning Specialist)

**Financial Aid – Children of Deceased Firefighters**

New York State Higher Education Services Corporation  
Albany, New York 12255

**Volunteer Firefighters' Benefit Law and Workers' Compensation Law**

**Workers' Compensation Board District Offices:**

Albany  
100 Broadway – Menands  
Albany, New York 12241  
(518) 474-2667

Syracuse  
State Office Building  
Syracuse, New York 13202  
(315) 428-4464

# ICHIEFS



## LODD Response Plan

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### Binghamton

State Office Building Annex  
Binghamton, New York 13901  
(607) 773-7867

### New York City

Two World Trade Center  
New York, New York 10047  
(212) 488-2020

### Buffalo

State Office Building  
125 Main Street  
Buffalo, New York 14203  
(716) 847-3158

### Hempstead

175 Fulton Avenue  
Hempstead, New York 11550  
(516) 486-4300

### Rochester

155 Main Street West  
Rochester, New York 14614

### Career Personnel

New York State Police and Firefighters' Retirement System  
Governor Alfred E. Smith State Office Building  
Albany, New York 12244  
(518) 474-7736



## Financial Benefits Checklist

Consider each of the following benefits. Do families of your department members have access to them? If so, do you know how to access the benefits? Some of these are individual benefits. Does your department have personnel records that reflect these? If you are unsure about a certain benefit, jot down notes for yourself here, then follow up by getting further information when you return home.

|                   | <u>Is this available to your firefighters?</u> |    |                |                     |
|-------------------|--|----|----------------|---------------------|
|                   | Yes  | No | Need More Info |                     |
| Source of Benefit |  |    |                | Notes/Action Needed |

### Federal

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program   |  |  |  |  |
| Scholarships for surviving children/spouse |  |  |  |  |
| Social Security Death or Disability        |  |  |  |  |
| Victims Assistance Program                 |  |  |  |  |
| Veterans' Benefits                         |  |  |  |  |

### State Government

|                                 |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Burial Allowance                |  |  |  |  |
| Death Benefit                   |  |  |  |  |
| State Insurance                 |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Children |  |  |  |  |
| State Tax Benefits              |  |  |  |  |
| Victim's Assistance Program     |  |  |  |  |



|                             |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Workmen's Compensation Plan |  |  |  |  |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|

### Local Government

|                                 |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Department Insurance            |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Children |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Spouses  |  |  |  |  |
| Employee Assistance Program     |  |  |  |  |
| Pension Plan                    |  |  |  |  |
| Final Paycheck                  |  |  |  |  |

### Non-Profit

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Education Benefits for Children                  |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Spouses                   |  |  |  |  |
| Booster Club, 100 Club, Heroes, Blue Coats, etc. |  |  |  |  |



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The information on the following pages (50-74) was excerpted from the Federation of Fire Chaplains Manual.

### Introduction from the Federation of Fire Chaplains

No one likes to even consider the prospect of arranging and conducting a funeral for someone who has touched our life. As fire chaplains, however, we serve a group of brave and dedicated men and women who continually place themselves in harm's way. Far too often they make the ultimate sacrifice. They give their lives as they strive to protect the lives and property of the community they serve.

When the unthinkable happens, it is up to the chaplain to do all he can to ensure that the fallen firefighter receives a tribute befitting the sacrifice that has been made. In this regard no effort is too large, and no detail is too small. It is truly a time for "all things to be done decently and in order." The purpose of this manual is to provide basic information that a chaplain can use to help the department he serves through a very trying time.

This manual is not intended to be all-inclusive in content or dogmatic in approach. There are many local customs and procedures that may be used during the funeral process. It is designed to provide a significant amount of information covering a broad spectrum of subjects. From this information, the chaplain may choose what best fits his particular situation and adapt it as necessary.

There are two keys to conducting a good fire department funeral. Show honor to the fallen firefighter, and care for his family. If these two things are accomplished, the chaplain has done his job well.



### GENERAL GUIDELINES

The conditions that will prevail when death strikes the fire department family will require the accomplishment of specific actions in order to meet the needs that will be encountered in the days that follow. These actions include:

- a. Good organization and coordination.
- b. Good communications.
- c. Maintenance of flexibility.
- d. Care not to overload any individual.
- e. Moral, emotional, and spiritual support for the next of kin.
- f. Meeting the requests and needs of the surviving family members.

The primary goal of the fire department will be to work with the funeral director and all others involved to ensure that a fitting tribute is paid to the fallen firefighter, and to ensure that the wishes and desires of the surviving family regarding the funeral ceremonies are carried out. The needs of the family will come before the wishes of the department.

Fire department personnel who are assigned duties related to the conduct of a fire department funeral will understand that their responsibility does not include the duties of a funeral director. Their duties do include working with the funeral director in order to accomplish shared goals in the best interest of the firefighter's family.

**PRE-INCIDENT PREPARATION**

The fire department should take steps to ensure that certain actions related to the proper conduct of a fire department funeral are completed prior to the occurrence of a tragic incident.

**Fire Department Chaplain--**The fire department should maintain an active chaplaincy program. The chaplain should be immediately contacted whenever the death of a fire department member is imminent or confirmed, regardless of the circumstances involved. The chaplain's services should be available to the surviving family throughout the funeral process.

**Personnel Information--**A Vital Information Record (copy attached) should be maintained on all fire department personnel. It may be used to assist in the treatment of personnel following serious injury, and in the notification of next of kin following a serious injury or line-of-duty death. The form should contain the following information:

- a. Complete name of the department member.
- b. Name and location (address/specific directions to residence) of next of kin.
- c. Name and location of alternates for next of kin.
- d. Religion or belief.
- e. Church affiliation and membership.
- f. Allergies to medication.
- g. Chronic medical conditions.
- h. Any other pertinent past medical history.

**Photographs--**The fire department should arrange for periodic photographs of all department personnel. Photographs should be maintained in department personnel files.

**Local Support Agencies--**The department should periodically contact local agencies in order to maintain a resource list of:

- a. Honor guards/color guards.
- b. Bands, buglers, pipers.
- c. Firing squads.
- d. Alarm bells (for "Last Alarm" service).
- e. Vocal and instrumental soloists.



Funeral Directors--Local directors should be contacted by the department and provided a copy of fire department funeral procedures. This will allow them to understand local protocols beforehand.

Ceremonial Clothing/Equipment--The fire department should have on hand the following clothing/equipment for use during fire department funerals:

- a. Badge and name tag presentation frame.
- b. Presentation flag.
- c. White gloves (sufficient number for honor guard and eight pallbearers).
- d. Extra badge for each rank in the department. (The name of a source for a duplicate name tag on an emergency basis should also be maintained.)

Key Personnel List--The department should maintain and annually update a list of personnel willing to serve in key positions:

- a. Survivor Action Officer
- b. Notification Officer
- c. Family Liaison Officer
- d. Funeral Officer
- e. Church Officer
- f. Procession Officer
- g. Cemetery Officer
- h. Hospital Liaison Officer

Personnel willing to serve should be provided with a funeral manual detailing the responsibilities of key positions and containing copies of fire department procedures relating to funerals and serious injury or death.

Honor Guard/Color Guard--The fire department should encourage personnel to participate in a department honor guard that will function during fire department



funerals and at other appropriate times. The following support may be provided:

- a. Properly tailored identical Class A (dress) uniforms with cap, white shirts, black tie and white ascot.
- b. White gloves for all members.
- c. White shoulder braiding for all members.
- d. Patent leather low-quarter shoes for all members.
- e. Parade flags (American, state, municipality, and/or fire department) with holders.
- f. Display axes with chrome heads (2).
- g. Time off as needed to provide honor guard and color guard services.



## FUNERAL OPTIONS

Honor Guard--Should an honor guard be requested, it is the responsibility of the funeral officer to ensure the request is complied with. The funeral officer will coordinate with honor guard personnel to schedule honor guard activities according to the funeral director's and family's wishes. The following basic rules usually apply to honor guard activities:

- a. Two honor guards will be posted at the casket, one at the head and one at the foot, at all times during viewing hours.
- b. A minimum of four honor guards will be assigned for each set of viewing hours.
- c. Honor guards will be rotated at 15 minute intervals. Relief guards will march up together. Posted guards will come to attention and smartly make relief. The relieved guards will march off together.
- d. Posted honor guards will assume the position of parade rest.
- e. American and state, city or departmental flags should be posted at the casket.
- f. Honor guards should wear Class A uniform with white gloves and black mourning bands over uniform badges.

Pallbearers--Should the family choose to use fire department members as pallbearers, it is the family liaison officer's responsibility to determine which firefighters the family would like to have. The total number of pallbearers is usually eight (8). Pallbearers should wear Class A uniforms with hats and white gloves.

- a. Due to the specific responsibilities they are assigned, pallbearers are exempt from following the majority of orders given to the remainder of a formation.
- b. Instructions on the removal, handling, and transporting of the casket should be given by the funeral officer with the advisement of the funeral director. If a fire engine is used as a caisson, pallbearers will hold a practice session the day before the funeral if possible. If this not possible, pallbearers must report to the funeral home several hours before the beginning of the service for a briefing and practice.



- c. If the casket is draped with a flag that will be presented to the next of kin, at least three pallbearers should be instructed on the proper method of removing, folding, and presenting the flag. A usually accepted procedure is for two pallbearers to fold the flag and present it to the third pallbearer who, in turn, presents it to the next of kin. Coordinating the flag folding will be the responsibility of the cemetery officer. Flag folding instructions are included in an appendix to this procedure. If the casket is not draped, and the department desires to present a flag to the next of kin, an already folded flag may be placed on the casket to be presented by a designated pallbearer or other appropriate person.
- d. If fire department pumpers are used as caisson and flower vehicle, pallbearers will ride on them. If pumpers are not used, the department will provide other department vehicles for the pallbearers during the procession.

#### Transportation

- a. The department may wish to offer a fire department vehicle and driver to the immediate family during the viewing and funeral period. The family liaison officer will normally provide this service.
- b. The department may also wish to see that the next of kin are provided limousine service by the funeral home on the day of the funeral.

Meals--During the period of mourning and post-funeral reception, meals may become a matter of difficulty for the deceased firefighter's family. Friends of the family and members of the department may be used to provide for these needs. The survivor action officer, in conjunction with the family liaison officer, will determine the need and coordinate the preparation and delivery of the meals provided by department members.

Child Care--Should child care present a problem for the family of the deceased during the viewing and funeral period, the family liaison officer should make the need known to the Survivor action officer who can coordinate providing needed care.

Family Liaison Officer--Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the death, or the deceased firefighter's status in the department, a family liaison officer should be assigned to make contact with the family. The liaison officer will determine the amount of involvement the department will provide and relay this information to the survivor action officer. The family liaison officer will assist the



family as much as possible during the process, including helping with items concerning the deceased's personal matters.

Initial Department Support--This will be determined by family requests as relayed by the family liaison officer. Appropriate key personnel should be assigned as the needs arise. No assumptions should be made or acted upon without contact and consent of the immediate family. The services provided by the department may involve a large commitment, or only bits and pieces.

Fire Department Chaplain--The fire department may or may not play a significant role. The amount of involvement the chaplain has will need to be determined by the family based on their preference of religion or clergy. One option that can be proposed is a shared responsibility between the clergy of family choice and the department chaplain. Once again, the family's wishes as determined by the family liaison officer must be honored. Should the department chaplain be requested, the following are areas of his concern:

- a. Initial next of kin notification.
- b. Comfort and counsel for surviving family members.
- c. Prayer service at the funeral home.
- d. Church services.
- e. Cemetery interment.
- f. Follow-up counseling for the family.

Procession--The family may indicate the desire for a procession from the funeral home or church to the cemetery. The procession is the responsibility of the procession officer and involves the staging of vehicles at the funeral home or church prior to the funeral, directing vehicles as they leave for the cemetery, and staging upon arrival at the cemetery. Specific considerations include:

- a. Department vehicles used as caisson, flower car, and miscellaneous transportation.
- b. Coordination with funeral director to determine procession route, including a drive by the deceased firefighter's fire station, home, or any other special considerations. If the procession passes the fire station, apparatus should be parked on the apron, firefighters on duty should assemble outside, come to attention as the procession passes, and toll a muffled



bell as the caisson or hearse passes.

- c. Static displays of apparatus along the procession route.
- d. Crossed ladders or aerial equipment at the funeral home, church, or cemetery entrance.

Caisson--A fire department pumper may be appropriate as a caisson to carry the casket. If a pumper is used, it must be taken out of service for a period of time and prepared as follows:

- a. Thoroughly clean and wax.
- b. Remove hose and dividers.
- c. Add available mourning flags or bunting.
- d. Have the operator in dress uniform.

In the event of inclement weather, an enclosed hearse should be used for the casket and the apparatus used for a flower car.

Flower Car--A fire department pumper may also be used as a flower vehicle. If so used, it must be taken out of service and prepared as indicated above for a caisson. Hose dividers need not be removed.

Formations--Special formations may be appropriate under certain circumstances. Should this option be exercised, the formations would be at the following points:

- a. Walk through of all attending firefighters at the funeral home or church.
- b. Honor guard formations on either side of the exit path of the casket from the funeral home to the hearse or caisson.
- c. Honor guard formations on either side of the casket path upon entry to and exit from the church.
- d. Honor guard formations on either side of the casket path from the hearse or caisson to the interment.

Taps--A single bugler at the cemetery may sound Taps. The location of the bugler should be approximately 75 feet from the gravesite.



Firing Squad--A military type firing squad may be used at the cemetery ceremony. If used, the squad will fire three volleys. The position of the firing squad is 75 feet from the gravesite.

NOTE: Firing squad volleys have been known to frighten young children in attendance at cemetery services. This should be made known to the family as part of the family liaison officer's briefing.

### Band and Musical Arrangements

- a. A band, piper, choir, soloists, or an organist may be used to play certain ceremonial arrangements during various funeral ceremonies.
- b. The family liaison officer will determine the wishes of the family in this area and communicate the needs to the funeral officer.

Last Alarm Service--A traditional bell ringing ceremony at the end of the church service or cemetery service may be used to signify the firefighter's last alarm. A short reading accompanies the ringing of the bell (see Appendix).

Readings--Numerous scripture passages and other fire department related readings are available and appropriate during the funeral services. The family liaison officer will work with the family to determine what readings they would like and who will read them.

Eulogy--A eulogy may be appropriate at any point in the funeral ceremonies. The family must decide who will deliver the eulogy and when. A clergy member, department chaplain, and/or close family friend from the fire department may perform this task. The family liaison officer makes the necessary contacts and advises the funeral officer.

Crossed Aerial Ladders--Should the family wish to have the crossed aerial ladders at the funeral site or cemetery entrance, the family liaison officer should forward this request to the survivor action officer for approval and coordination.

Static Equipment Display--During the procession, the family may choose to have a static display of department apparatus with their crews at attention and saluting the passing casket and family vehicle. This final tribute may be set up at the funeral home or church, at key locations along the procession route, at a fire station on the procession route, or at the cemetery entrance. The family liaison officer will communicate this need to the survivor action officer.

Burial In Uniform--Should the family choose to bury the deceased firefighter in



uniform, the family liaison officer will deliver the uniform to the funeral officer or funeral director. The family liaison officer may also deliver other clothing to be used.

Presentation of Fire Department Badge--As a part of the funeral service at the funeral home or church, the fire chief may present the badge and name tag worn by the deceased firefighter to the next of kin. The items will be presented in a framed display also containing a CFD uniform patch. The support services specialist will work with the fire chief to obtain the badge and name tag actually worn by the firefighter and to obtain duplicates to be placed on the burial uniform.

Closed Casket --In the event closed casket ceremonies are chosen, the family may wish to place a picture of the firefighter in uniform along with his dress hat on top of the closed casket.

Walk Through--A walk through of firefighters in attendance at the funeral may be used to pay tribute to the deceased firefighter. If used, the funeral officer will schedule the walk through and have firefighters form up single file by department. The formation will walk single file past the casket with each firefighter stopping briefly to pay tribute. The formation then exits the funeral home or church or goes directly to assigned seating areas.

Post-Services Reception--Should the family approve, a reception may be held following the funeral. A church facility, school cafeteria, fire station, or other facility may be used for this purpose. The survivor action officer will coordinate the event if used. He may call upon department members, the firefighters association, or local service organizations to assist in donating or preparing food.

Welfare Fund--Fire department members or local organizations may wish to start a memorial fund for the deceased firefighter's family. The survivor action officer may request the assistance of fire department members, the firefighters association, or local service organizations in establishing this fund. The family will be advised by the family liaison officer that this is taking place.

Half-Staff Flags--American flags flying at fire stations should be brought to half mast upon notification that a fire department member has died. They should remain at half-mast until at least 1700 hours the day of the funeral and interment. When the American flag is at half mast, no other flags will be flown on the same halyard. For line-of-duty deaths, the department should request other city facilities also fly their flags at half-mast.

Badge Shrouding--The shrouding of a badge is accomplished by placing a 1/2" to 3/4" piece of black material horizontally around the badge at its midpoint. The



shroud should be placed on badges at the time of notification of the death and will remain on the badge until the funeral and interment are completed. For line-of-duty deaths, the badge shrouds may remain in place for a 30-day mourning period.

Flag Presentation--If the casket is draped with a flag, an appropriate flag presentation ceremony should be conducted at the conclusion of the cemetery service (see page 79).



## KEY POSITIONS FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNERALS

### Survivor Action Officer

- a. The fire chief will assume the position of survivor action officer or appoint someone to act as his representative in providing liaison and support with the family of a firefighter killed in the line of duty. The survivor action officer is a special staff assignment. As a direct representative of the fire chief the survivor action officer should receive the full cooperation of the entire fire department. The survivor action officer will appoint assistants and delegate responsibilities as required to successfully complete all assigned duties.
- b. The survivor action officer is responsible for the management of several important activities. His principal concern is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. He will render whatever assistance is necessary in settling the personal affairs of the deceased member and assisting the family through the crisis.
- c. The survivor action officer coordinates and supervises the activities of a number of key personnel assigned to handle the specific aspects of the funeral arrangements and to assist the surviving family. These key personnel include:
  1. Family Liaison Officer--On call to the surviving family 24 hours per day to provide any assistance and support needed. Provides the survivor action officer with constant updates on the families status and needs.
  2. Funeral Officer--Provides coordination and interaction with the funeral director and other personnel on funeral arrangements.
  3. Church Officer--Provides coordination and interaction with the church involved to arrange the funeral service.
  4. Cemetery Officer--Provides coordination with the cemetery and others involved in the funeral arrangements in order to organize all arrangements at the gravesite.
  5. Procession Officer--Arranges and directs the funeral procession.
- d. Additional duties for the survivor action officer include:



1. Assure next of kin notification has been properly accomplished.
2. Officially notify all fire department stations of the death and have flags lowered to half mast. Make arrangements for the notification of off-duty and vacationing personnel.
3. Notify the following personnel and agencies of the death:
  - a) Union president.
  - b) All other city departments.
  - c) All other fire departments and police departments.
  - d) Make appropriate follow-up contacts when the funeral arrangements and schedules have been determined.
4. Work with the family liaison officer to determine the desired method of collecting the deceased firefighter's personal items from the fire station.

NOTE: If the next of kin desires to collect items from the locker personally, the contents should be screened in advance and any inappropriate material removed.
5. Conduct a coordination meeting with the key personnel as soon as possible so that everyone understands what options will be used in the funeral ceremony. Once the funeral procedures are established all key personnel should be instructed to make the appropriate contacts and given the time for a final coordination meeting. Conduct a final meeting with key personnel to:
  - a. Establish schedule and timetables.
  - b. Identify times and places for group gatherings as required by the ceremonies to be conducted.
  - c. Re-contact all appropriate people and agencies with the schedule, meeting places, and special instructions.
6. Be a key contact person for outside agencies, news media, and other departments in relation to the death and subsequent ceremonies.



7. Make appropriate arrangements for a post-funeral meal and facility to handle a large group of people (with family approval through the family liaison officer). Arrangements will also be made for a fire department member to be on hand at the residence to assist the family in any manner possible. Additional meals for immediate family members will also be provided as needed.
8. Coordinate with the human resources department to arrange for final paycheck and the completion of any required paperwork.
9. Contact neighboring fire departments and arrange for mutual aid stand-in fire and ambulance companies during the funeral.
10. Maintain an easily accessible contact position for the duration of the funeral process.
11. Coordinate providing meals for the family and assure future family follow-up by the family liaison officer.
12. Assure that all department functions return to normal.

Family Liaison Officer In every incident involving the death of a firefighter, or when the death of an injured firefighter appears imminent, a family liaison officer should be assigned by the fire chief. The individual so assigned will perform the following duties:

- a. The family liaison officer should have a fire department vehicle, pager, and portable radio assigned to him for the entire funeral process.
- b. Promptly report to the deceased's residence, or to the treating medical facility, and provide reassurance and support to the family. The family liaison officer is to ensure that the NEEDS OF THE FAMILY come before the wishes of the department.
- c. The family liaison officer must be prepared to discuss all aspects of the funeral process and counsel the family in its decisions. The FLO must be able to relay information to the fire chief as to what level of involvement the department will have in the funeral process in accordance with the family's wishes.
  1. The FLO will make the family aware of what the department can offer in the way of assistance if the family decides to have



- a line-of-duty funeral.
- 2. The family should be made aware of churches with seating capacities large enough to accommodate attendance at the funeral. However, any alternate church will need to be made aware that the family minister or fire department chaplain will officiate at the service. **THE DEPARTMENT MUST ONLY MAKE THE FAMILY AWARE OF THE ALTERNATIVES. IT IS THE FAMILY'S CHOICE.**
- 3. The FLO will brief the family on fire department funeral procedures (i.e., 21-gun salute, presenting of the flag, playing of Taps, Last Alarm, the ladder archway, etc.).
- 4. The FLO will see that the surviving parents, if not the immediate next of kin, are afforded proper recognition and have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and procession.
- d. The family liaison officer will assist the family in determining the eight primary pallbearers and the optional honorary bearers.
- e. The family liaison officer will assist the family in determining:
  - 1. Type of interment.
  - 2. Which funeral home will be used.
  - 3. Which clergy will be used (whether or not the fire department chaplain will be used).
  - 4. Which cemetery will be used.
  - 5. Will the deceased be buried in uniform? If so, obtain a uniform.
  - 6. Obtain all articles of clothing that the deceased will wear and deliver them to the funeral director.
  - 7. Obtain a recent photograph of the deceased for the funeral director.
  - 8. Determine the length of the funeral service to include:



- a) Readers of scripture.
  - b) What scriptures will be read.
  - c) Music to be used and individuals to perform the music.
  - d) Who will deliver the funeral sermon and/or eulogy.
  - e) Will Last Alarm bell service be used.
9. Length of the wake and establishing a tentative schedule.
10. Ceremonies that will take place at the cemetery.
- a) Band or Piper
  - b) Honor Guard/Firing Squad
  - c) Readings
  - d) Eulogy and who will deliver it
  - e) Taps/Last Alarm
  - f) Will a pumper be used as a caisson or will a conventional hearse be used
  - g) Will a pumper or ladder truck be used as a flower car
  - h) Will personnel walk alongside the caisson or ride in the procession schedule
11. Identify and determine any other special considerations on behalf of the family.
- f. The family liaison officer will be available to the family on a 24-hour basis to assist in any way necessary.
  - g. The family liaison officer will also have to address the following items with the family:



1. Autopsy report, birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates (workers compensation), VA or military records.
2. Consult an attorney for the family to review all matters.
3. Fire department retirement benefits due to surviving beneficiaries.
4. VA widow and children's benefits and burial benefits.
5. Social Security survivor benefits.
6. Public Safety Officer Benefits (federal and state).
7. Life insurance plans (personal and city).
8. Final paycheck, including sick leave, vacation payoff, and W-2 forms.
9. Deferred compensation account.
10. Income tax report.
11. Loans outstanding that may be insured, including credit union loans.
12. Transfer of ownership of property and vehicles to survivors.
13. Review of all bills before payment by survivors for legality, honesty, and accuracy. This should include last illness, previous debts, and funeral expenses. Some bills may be covered by insurance or otherwise not be legally due.
14. Change title of all bank accounts.
15. Advise survivors not to loan money to any person, especially friends and relatives. Advise them to put any available funds in the bank. There will be ample time to invest wisely after a greater degree of stability returns to their lives.
16. Investigate the possibility of scholarships available for college for surviving dependents.



17. Check on mortgage insurance.
  18. Check on possible worker's compensation claims with an attorney.
  19. Check on any possible third party lawsuits with an attorney. For example, the surviving family of a firefighter at a fire that is hit by a vehicle may be able to sue the operator of the vehicle.
- h. The family liaison officer must be constantly alert for ways he can assist the family of a fallen firefighter to cope with the tragedy that has entered their lives. Any special needs that are noticed should be relayed to the fire chief immediately so that the necessary resources to meet those needs can be acquired.

#### Funeral Officer

- a. The funeral officer will coordinate with the family liaison officer and the funeral director to ensure that the wishes of the deceased firefighters family concerning all aspects of the funeral are carried out.
- b. The funeral officer will attend all meetings called by the survivor action officer in order to determine the following:
  1. The schedule of events and the length of time the mourning and burial process will involve.
  2. Whether fire department vehicles will be used as caisson or flower car. Should they not be used, ensure alternative arrangements are made with the funeral director.
- c. If the firefighter's immediate family has not requested limousine service from the funeral home for transportation during the day of the funeral, the funeral officer, at the direction of the fire chief, will advise the funeral director to provide the service and send an invoice for the service to the fire department.
- d. Coordinate with honor guard members to establish an honor guard schedule at the funeral home and church.
- e. Coordinate formal walk through of uniformed personnel during the period



of viewing with the departments involved and with the funeral director. This includes seating arrangements.

- f. Work with the fire department chaplain or clergy member designated by the family to coordinate any prayer services to be conducted at the funeral home and forward information to the survivor action officer.
- g. Develop a schedule for uniformed personnel the day of the funeral for coordination at the funeral site. This includes:
  1. Arrival time for uniformed personnel and specific instructions as to where to gather.
  2. Briefing and practice of formations that will be used when the casket is removed.
  3. Briefing on proper protocols for entering and leaving the funeral.
- h. Coordinate vehicle staging with the procession officer, including arrangements for fire department vehicles being used. Ensure that sufficient personnel are available to properly direct and stage incoming apparatus and vehicles.
- i. Obtain the uniform or other clothing that the deceased will wear during viewing from the family liaison officer and deliver it to the funeral director.
- j. Coordinate with the family liaison officer on special readings or eulogies to be used during the funeral.
- k. Obtain white gloves for all department pallbearers.

**Procession Officer**--The procession officer has the responsibility of coordinating the funeral procession from the funeral home to the church (if necessary) and from the church or other funeral site to the cemetery. Duties include:

- a. Attend all coordination meetings to determine the following:
  1. Name of the funeral home to be used.
  2. Name of the church to be used.
  3. Name of the cemetery.



4. Will a pumper be used as a caisson or will a conventional hearse be used?
5. Will a pumper be used as a flower car?
6. Schedule of events the day of the funeral.
7. Will the procession involve walking?
  - a) Honor Guard
  - b) Band or Pipers
  - c) Pallbearers
- b. Establish a system for staging and coordinating vehicles at all locations where funeral activities will occur. Coordinate the vehicle staging with appropriate key personnel (church officer, cemetery officer, etc.). Ensure that sufficient personnel are available at all staging locations to efficiently direct and stage apparatus and vehicles.
- c. Coordinate with the family liaison officer to determine any special considerations involved in the procession. These may include:
  1. Passing the firefighter's home, fire station, or other significant location.
  2. Special static displays of equipment and personnel at a location on the procession route.
  3. The use of crossed aerial ladders at the cemetery entrance or other location. If used, contact the survivor action officer to obtain necessary apparatus.
- d. Contact the police department or other appropriate agency for assistance in working with other police departments and the funeral director in order to:
  1. Establish routes for the procession.
  2. Determine traffic control needs.



- a) Traffic rerouting and street closings at the funeral home and church (contact Public Works Dept. to obtain barricades as needed).
  - b) Traffic control at any special assembly points used.
  - c) If necessary post "No Parking" signs around the funeral home, church, and any other assembly points.
  - d) Directing staged vehicles as they line up for procession(s).
3. Arrange for procession escorts.
- e. Develop maps showing the procession route and any other needed information. Maps will be handed out at the briefing at the funeral site prior to the beginning of the service.
  - f. Align vehicles in the procession basically as follows (coordinate with funeral director):
    - 1. Lead Escort
    - 2. Fire department pumper used as flower car
    - 3. Hearse or pumper used as caisson
    - 4. Family vehicles
    - 5. Pallbearers (if not riding on flower vehicle and caisson)
    - 6. Honorary Pallbearers
    - 7. Honor Guard/Color Guard
    - 8. Fire Department Chief vehicle
    - 9. Other Fire Department vehicles
    - 10. Police Department vehicles
    - 11. City Officials



12. Vehicles from other fire departments
  13. Vehicles from other police departments
  14. Family friends
  15. Rear Escort
- g. If fire department apparatus is used as a caisson and/or flower vehicle, contact the survivor action officer and determine which apparatus will be used. Ensure the following items are taken care of in relation to fire department vehicles:
1. Apparatus is thoroughly cleaned and hose beds stripped.
  2. Hose dividers removed from apparatus used as a caisson.
  3. Hose bed on caisson pumper is adapted to easily facilitate casket placement and removal (coordinate with funeral director).
  4. Apparatus operators have full dress uniforms to wear while driving.
  5. Deceased firefighter's bunker gear is obtained and placed in a riding position on the caisson (bunker boots will be turned backwards).
  6. If used, bunting and/or funeral flags are affixed to the apparatus.

Church Officer--The church officer has the primary responsibility of coordinating all of the activities and ceremonies at the church. Duties include:

- a. Attend coordination meetings and determine the following from the survivor action officer and family liaison officer:
  1. Schedule of events.
  2. Location of the church.
  3. Clergy to be used, including fire department chaplain.



4. Scripture to be read and readers.
  5. Type and length of service.
  6. What ceremonial items are being requested
    - a) Badge presentation
    - b) Special readings
    - c) Special eulogies
  7. Music to be used and who will present.
  8. Who will deliver eulogy and the deceased firefighter's résumé.
- b. Contact procession officer and coordinate vehicle staging at the church.
- c. Make seating arrangements for those attending the church service. In addition to family members, dedicated seating should be provided for:
1. Pallbearers
  2. Honor Guard
  3. Uniformed Personnel
- d. Determine formations to be used and coordinate them during the arrival and removal of the casket from the church. Review military commands for the formations and issue them when appropriate.
- e. Develop a program for the service and any special prayer cards and provide for their reproduction and distribution.

Cemetery Officer--The cemetery officer is responsible for the preparation and coordination of events that occur at the gravesite from the time procession vehicles have stopped and people exit the vehicles. He is also responsible for liaison with cemetery personnel. Duties include:

- a. Attend coordination meetings and determine the following from the survivor action officer and family liaison officer:



1. What type of interment will be used:
  - a) Burial
  - b) Crypt
  - c) Cremation
2. Does the family wish to have:
  - a) Final Alarm Service
  - b) Taps played
  - c) Firing Squad
  - d) Scripture read (who will read it)
  - e) Music (who will perform)
- b. Schedule and coordinate the sequence of events that will take place at the gravesite. This includes coordinating any special requests received from the survivor action officer or family liaison officer.
- c. Develop the type and location of formations that will be used by uniformed personnel and issue orders as appropriate and consistent with Military Standards.
- d. Ensure that the cemetery takes care of necessary items, such as:
  1. Overhead protection for immediate family at the gravesite.
  2. Public address system provided (if needed).
- e. Ensure that pallbearers are thoroughly familiar with the process of folding and presenting the flag to the next of kin.
- f. If the family situation warrants, coordinate with the survivor action officer to have emergency medical personnel/equipment present.
- g. Upon dismissal of the formation, give instructions as to the location of the post funeral meal (as determined by the survivor action officer and family action officer).



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## MISCELLANEOUS CONSIDERATIONS

Inclement weather conditions may have an impact on funeral services. If severe weather conditions are anticipated, personnel involved in coordinating the funeral services will work with the survivor action officer and family liaison officer to have alternative plans available to be used as required.

It is possible that the funeral, church service or other aspect of the funeral will be held in a location other than the city in which the firefighter worked. This will complicate the process and all planning steps must be coordinated with officials and agencies of the involved jurisdiction(s). If possible, representatives from both fire and police departments of all communities involved should be present at planning meetings to give their input.

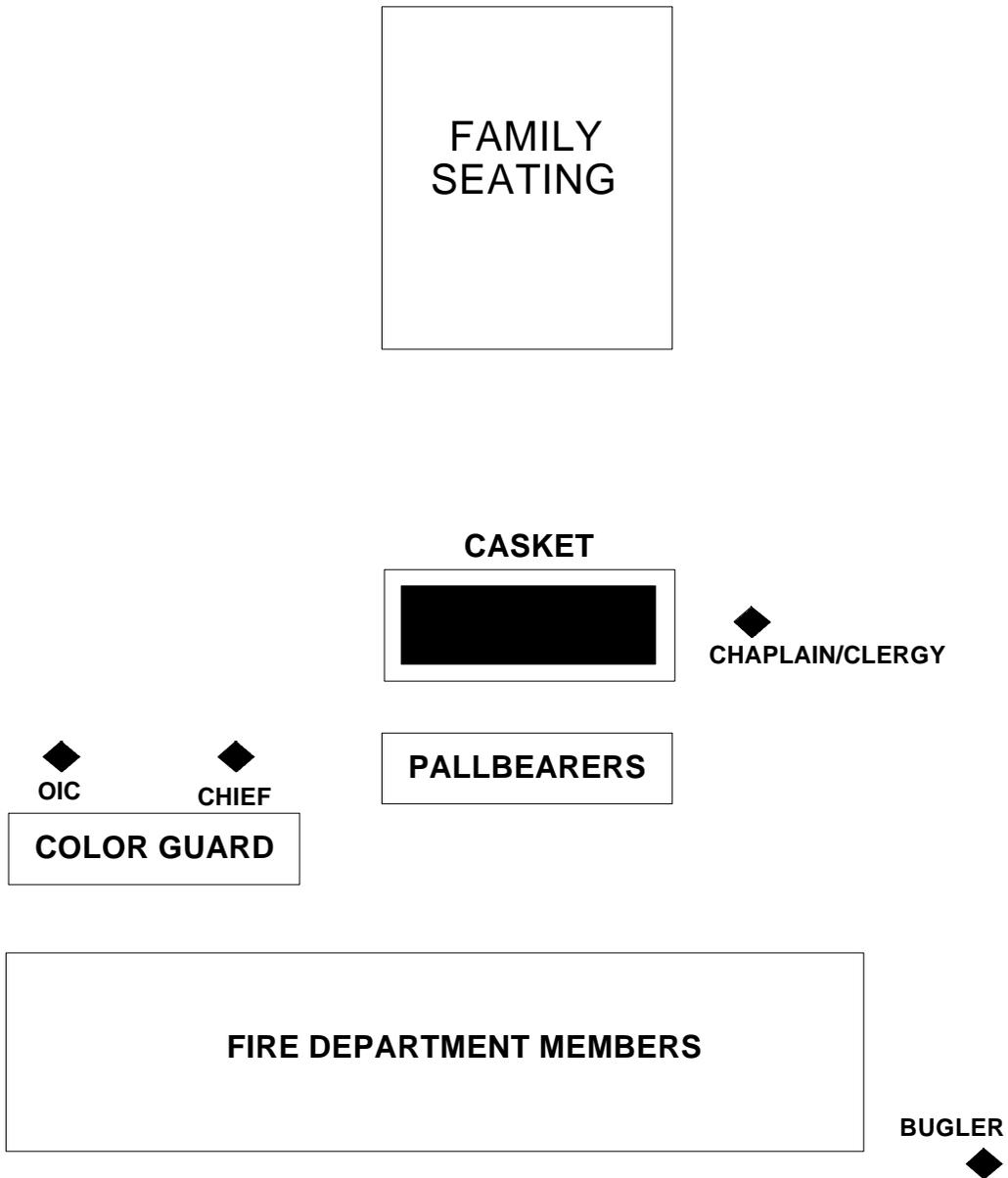
For a line-of-duty death, a large contingent of visiting firefighters will probably want to attend the funeral. If a procession is held from the funeral home to the church, it is advisable to have visiting firefighters and their apparatus report directly to the church for staging prior to the arrival of the procession from the funeral home. All firefighters and apparatus may take part in the procession from the church, or final funeral site, to the cemetery. If a march of firefighters to the church is to be conducted, only personnel from the host department should participate.



# APPENDICES



**APPENDIX ONE**  
**SUGGESTED CEMETERY FORMATIONS**





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## APPENDIX TWO

### MILITARY STANDARDS

#### POSITION OF ATTENTION

Assume the position of "Attention" on the command "ATTENTION."

To assume this position bring the heels together smartly so that the heels are on the same line with the toes pointing out equally, forming an angle of 45 degrees. Keep the legs straight without locking the knees. Hold the body erect with the hips level, chest lifted and arched, and the shoulders square and even.

Let the arms hang straight, without stiffness, along the sides with the back of the hands outward. Curl the fingers so that the tips of the thumb are alongside and touching the first joint of the forefingers. Keep the thumbs straight and along the seams of the trousers with all fingertips touching the trouser leg.

Keep the head erect and hold it squarely to the front with the chin drawn slightly in so that the axis of the head and neck is vertical. Look straight to the front.

Rest the weight of the body equally on the heels and balls of the feet. Remain silent except when replying to a question or when directed otherwise.

#### POSITION OF PARADE REST

Parade rest is commanded from the position of "Attention" only. The command for this movement is "PARADE, REST."

On the command of execution ("REST") move the left foot ten inches to the left of the right foot. Keep the legs straight, resting the weight of the body equally on the heels and balls of both feet. Simultaneously place the hands at the small of the back, centered on the belt line. Keep the fingers of both hands extended and joined, interlocking the thumbs so that the palm of the right hand is outward.

Hold the head and eyes as at the position of "Attention." Remain silent and do not move.

"Stand at ease," "At Ease," or "Rest" may be commanded from this position.



### STAND AT EASE

The command for this movement is "STAND AT, EASE." On the command of execution ("EASE") execute "Parade Rest" but turn the head and eyes directly toward the officer in charge. "At Ease" or "Rest" may be commanded from this position.

The command for this movement is "AT EASE." On the command "At Ease" movement is allowed but personnel must remain standing and silent with the right foot in place. "Rest" may be commanded from this position.

### REST

The command for this movement is "REST." On the command "Rest" movement, talking, smoking, or drinking is allowed unless otherwise specified. Personnel must remain standing with the right foot in place. "At Ease" may be commanded from this position.

### HAND SALUTE

The hand salute is a one-count movement. The command is "PRESENT, ARMS." On the command of execution ( Arms") raise the right hand to the headdress and with the tip of the forefinger touch the rim of the visor slightly to the right of the right eye. The fingers and thumb are extended and joined, palm down. The outer edge of the hand is barely canted downward so that neither the palm nor the back of the hand is visible from the front. The upper arm is horizontal with the elbow inclined slightly forward and the hand and wrist straight.

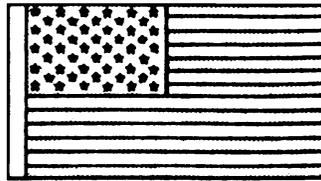
Order arms from this salute is a one-count movement. The command is "ORDER, ARMS." On the command of execution ( Arms") return the hand smartly to the side, resuming the position of attention.

When uncovered or when wearing a headdress without a visor, the hand salute is executed in the same manner as previously described, except the tip of the forefinger touches the forehead near the eyebrow and slightly to the right of the right eye.

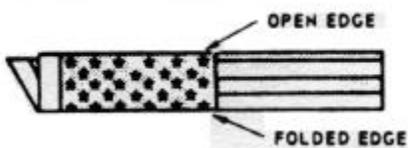
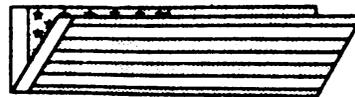


APPENDIX THREE

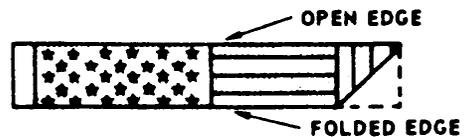
CORRECT METHOD OF FOLDING  
THE  
FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES



FOLD THE LOWER STRIPED SECTION OF THE FLAG OVER THE BLUE FIELD

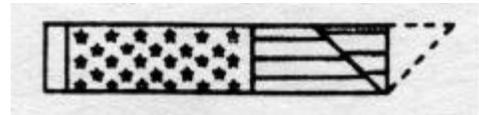


FOLD THE FOLDED EDGE OVER TO MEET THE OPEN EDGE



START A TRIANGULAR FOLD BY BRINGING THE STRIPED CORNER OF THE FOLDED EDGE TO THE OPEN EDGE

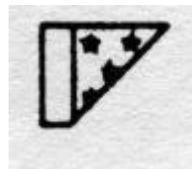
FOLD THE OUTER POINT INWARD PARALLEL WITH THE OPEN EDGE TO FORM A SECOND TRIANGLE



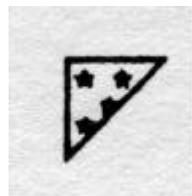
CONTINUE FOLDING UNTIL THE ENTIRE LENGTH OF THE FLAG IS FOLDED INTO A TRIANGLE WITH ONLY THE BLUE FIELD AND MARGIN SHOWING



TUCK THE REMAINING MARGIN INTO THE POCKET FORMED BY THE FOLDS AT THE BLUE FIELD EDGE OF THE FLAG



THE PROPERLY FOLDED FLAG SHOULD RESEMBLE A COCKED HAT





APPENDIX FOUR

SUGGESTED "LAST ALARM" CEREMONY

Chaplain or Department Member reads or recites:

Throughout most of history, the life of a firefighter has been closely associated with the ringing of a bell. As he began his hours of duty, it is the bell that started it off. Through the day and night, each alarm was sounded by a bell, which called him to fight fire and to place his life in jeopardy for the good of his fellow man. And when the fire was out, and the alarm had come to an end, the bell rang three times to signal the end.

And now our Brother \_\_\_\_\_ has completed his task, his duties well done, and the bell rings three times in memory of, and in tribute to, his life and service

Officer in charge calls firefighters to attention.

Color guard called to "Present Arms"

Bell is struck three times

Color guard called to "Order Arms"

Firefighters seated (if in church or funeral home)

Closing Prayer



APPENDIX FIVE

SAMPLE ORDER OF EVENTS

ORDER OF EVENTS

Funeral Services for Firefighter John Doe  
Carrollton Fire Department

June 1, 1994

- 1:00           Arrival of hearse at First Baptist, Carrollton
- Honor Guard Posted  
                  Color Guard Posted
- 1:30-2:00     Guests, fire personnel, and fire apparatus arrive.
- Fire personnel placed in formations  
                  Explanation of commands is given  
                  Attention  
                  Present Arms  
                  Order Arms
- 2:00-2:15     Arrival of family and processional
- Pallbearers remove the casket  
                  Procession enters the church  
                  Minister  
                  Color Guard  
                  Pallbearers/Casket  
                  Honorary Pallbearers  
                  Family  
                  Carrollton Fire Department members  
                  Other fire department members



2:15-3:00 Funeral Service

- Special Music
- Reading of Biography
- Special Readings
- Eulogy
- Funeral Sermon
- Presentation of Badge
- Walk By of Fire Personnel
- Benediction

3:00-3:15 Funeral Recessional

- Honorary Pallbearers
- Minister
- Pallbearers/Casket
- Family
- Fire Department Members
- Other Guests

3:15-4:00 Procession to Cemetery

- Lead Escort
- Carrollton Fire Department Engine
- Hearse
- Family Vehicles
- Pallbearers
- Honorary Pallbearers
- Honor Guard
- Host Fire Department Chief Vehicle
- Other Host Fire Department Vehicles
- Police Department Vehicles
- City Officials
- Other Fire Department Vehicles
- Other Police Department Vehicles
- Friends, Private Vehicles
- Rear Escort



4:00-4:15 Gravesite Processional

Color Guard  
Carrollton Fire Department Members  
Other Fire Department Members  
Honorary Pallbearers  
Minister  
Pallbearers/Casket  
Family  
Friends

4:15-4:45 Graveside Service

Prayers and Scripture  
Words to the Family  
Final Prayer  
Last Alarm Ceremony  
Taps  
Presentation of Flag  
Benediction  
Dismissal



**Memphis Division of Fire Services (Funeral Protocols and Death Notification)**  
Division of Fire Services Funeral Protocols

**FUNERAL PROTOCOLS AND DEATH NOTIFICATION**

The following death notification and protocol procedures will be in effect from this date forward and will be adhered to unless unusual circumstances prohibit. It is crucial that no employee contact the family of a critically injured or deceased employee prior to proper notification by specific, identified staff personnel. The Director of Fire Services or OSHA staff will coordinate notification and transportation of the immediate family through the Fire Communications Bureau.

**Notification of Death**

The Fire Communications Bureau (FCB) should be immediately notified in the event of death or serious injury. Strict adherence to the following notification order and/or procedures is mandatory.

The FCB will notify the following:

- A. Director of Fire Services
- B. Deputy Director of Fire Services
- C. OSHA Coordinator
- D. Chief of Emergency Operations
- E. Emergency Unit Supervisor (if on-duty death)
- F. Mayor (after conversation with director if an on-duty death)
- G. No vocal alarm announcements of the death will be made until complete family notification has been assured.
- H. Information will not be released to the news media until authorized by the director or his designee.

The OSHA office staff will advise the Fire Communications Bureau when to notify the fire division chaplain as well as to the appropriate location for reporting.

The following describes the various types of deaths and/or funeral procedures to be adhered to by all members of the Division of Fire Services:

**Class I Death/Funeral**

**Full Line of Duty (Trauma Induced)**

A Class I funeral is provided for members who are killed (trauma) at the scene of an emergency incident or who is killed responding to or coming from the scene of an emergency incident.

This funeral service will also be provided from members who are injured at the scene of a fire or an emergency and who later die as a result of the injuries.



There may be other deaths that, due to particular circumstances, could be classified as being "Full Line-of-Duty Death" by the Director of Fire Services.

This type (Class I) funeral service will not be provided for employees who die of heart, lung, or hypertension related causes but are not engaged in fire fighting or emergency activities at the time of death. The Class I funeral service is reserved for employees who die from injuries sustained at the scene of emergency incident.

Upon notification that there has been a line-of-duty death, the following will be initiated:

1. The Fire Communication Bureau (FCB) will notify all companies by vocal alarm of the funeral arrangements, as they are completed. The proper uniform of the day of services will also be announced.
2. All work-site flags will be flown at half-mast from notification of the death until the following day after the funeral services.
3. The engine house/work site location of the deceased employee as well as all stations located in the funeral procession route will be draped in black.
4. All Division of Fire Services personnel should wear the Class A uniform to the funeral and sit in the section of the church/funeral home provided or reserved for them. Black tape should be worn over badges from notification of the death until the following day after funeral services.
5. Upon entry or exit of the casket from the church or funeral home, all uniformed employees will form a pathway from the hearse to the chapel when the body is placed or removed for services and/or burial. As the casket approaches the fire employees, the command of "FIRE DIVISION, ATTENTION" will be given. At the command of "PRESENT ARMS" all uniformed fire personnel will salute (with hats on). Any personnel not in uniform will place his hand over his heart. After the casket has passed, the command of "ORDER ARMS" will be given and the salute dropped. After the salute is dropped, all fire personnel will proceed into the chapel/funeral home and sit in the designated area for the funeral services.
6. After services are completed, all fire personnel will move out of the chapel/funeral home (before civilians) and form the pathway once again for the casket to be put in the hearse.
7. When the hearse arrives at the cemetery, all civilians will be held back until the uniformed personnel form the pathway to the final resting place. The salute will be repeated at this location.

In accordance with the family's desires, the fire division will make the following arrangements. It is important to note that FAMILY WISHES dictate the fire division's involvement in all funeral arrangements. These arrangements are



coordinated by the Division of Fire Services OSHA staff, appointed assistants, and funeral home directors only. An authorized representative of the Division of Fire Services will coordinate the following the family.

- A. Transportation to the funeral home to make funeral arrangements.
- B. Transportation to and from services on the day of the funeral.
- C. Arrangement for pallbearers in Class A uniform with white gloves.
- D. Arrangement for the honor guard to stand vigilance at the head and foot of the casket from the time the body is ready for viewing until the funeral services begin. The honor guard will wear Class A uniform with white gloves.
- E. Arrangement for color guard in Class A uniform with white gloves.
- F. Arrangement for American flag for casket.
- G. Arrangement for first line fire equipment (engine, truck, emergency unit) to precede the hearse in the funeral procession if the body is not carried on the equipment itself.
- H. Arrangement to have the appropriate number of division red cars, with lights flashing, to be in the funeral procession to the cemetery. These cars will immediately follow the family car in the funeral procession.
- I. Provide motorized escort from funeral services to the burial site.
- J. Arrange for "Taps," bagpipes and 21-gun salute at the cemetery (if desired by the family).
- K. Full assistance provided to the family in processing widow or survivor's benefits.

### **Class II Death/Funeral On Duty But Not Trauma Induced**

A Class II death pertains to personnel who have died while on duty, but not due to trauma or injuries sustained while in the performance of emergency response activities.

1. The Fire Communications Bureau (FCB) will notify the proper division personnel as outlined in the notification list.
2. Announcement will be made over the vocal alarm system to all companies that the death has occurred and include any funeral arrangement known at that time.
3. All flags will be flown at half mast from notification of death until the day following the funeral services within the Division of Fire Services. Black tape may be worn over badges from date of notification until the day following the funeral services.
4. The engine house/worksite of the deceased employee will be draped in black.



5. Honor guard, bagpipes and 21-gun salute will not be utilized for Class II funeral services.
6. Division red cars in the funeral procession will be mixed among civilian cars and lights will not be flashing.
7. Motorized escort will be provided from the funeral service location to the burial site, if requested by the family.
8. All personnel are urged to wear the Class A uniform.
9. Pallbearers, if requested by the family, will wear the Class A uniform.
10. Designated seating will be encouraged.
11. Assistance will be provided for processing widow or survivor's benefits for the family of the deceased.

### **Class III Death/Funeral Off-Duty Death**

A Class III death is a death that occurs while the employee is in an off-duty status and not related to any division emergency activities. Upon notification of this type death, the following will be initiated:

1. The Fire Communications Bureau will notify the proper fire services personnel as outlined in the notification list with the exception of the mayor and the unit bureau supervisor.
2. Announcement of the death and any known funeral arrangements will be made over the vocal alarm system.
3. The flag will be flown half mast at the engine house of the assigned deceased employee. All other flags will be at full mast. Black tape may be worn over badges from date of notification until the day following the funeral services.
4. The Division of Fire Services will assist in notification of pallbearers, if requested by the family (Class A uniform).
5. Honor guard, bagpipes and 21-gun salute will not be utilized for Class III funeral services.
6. Class A uniforms will be optional for all personnel.
7. Seating in designated areas of the funeral services facility will be encouraged.
8. Motorized escort, if requested by family, from the funeral services to burial site will be furnished.
9. Red cars in the funeral procession will be mixed among civilian and lights will not be flashing.
10. Assistance will be provided for processing widow or survivor's benefits for the family of the deceased.

Note: All other active member deaths will be handled in the same manner as a Class III (off-duty) death



**Class IV Death/Funeral  
Retirees**

In the even of the death of a retiree of the Division of Fire Services, the following is provided:

1. When a death notice of an active or retired employee of the Division of Fire Services is received, the notice will be read over the vocal alarm one time on each shift (A, B, & C), funeral date permitting.
2. Assistance will be provided in processing widow or survivor's death benefits.
3. Assistance in notifying pallbearers, if requested by family.
4. Class A uniforms will be optional for all personnel.
5. Any family request will be honored, when possible, based upon expected participation.



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**Employee Data Sheet**

Name of Deceased: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Shift: \_\_\_\_\_

Station Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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Note: This information, except for home telephone number, should be made available for release to media, departmental members, and various outside agencies. Also, provide departmental photograph to media. Public Information Officer (PIO) should be contact point for outside agencies or fire departments.



**UPON NOTIFICATION THAT A DEATH HAS OCCURRED**

Initial Procedures

1. Immediately proceed to treating hospital.
  - a. Advise all officials that a death has occurred, through the Watch Commander
    - a. Fire Director
    - b. Fire Deputy Director
    - c. Mayor (after discussing with the director)
    - d. City Council members
    - e. Union President/Vice-President
    - f. Fire Department Chaplain
    - g. Dispatch Fire Investigators for multiple still photographs and video of the death scene. Secure all pertinent areas with barrier tape.
    - h. Have Safety Commander to secure all Protective Clothing and Equipment used by injured fireman. Transport all items to secured area at OSHA office.
    - i. Contact Employee Assistance Program (EAP) administrator for initiation of Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD).
    - j. Others
2. Have personnel in a RED car pick up family members, if not at hospital. Do not release any information until ALL family has been notified of the death.
3. Arrange quarters for out-of-town family if possible.
  - a. Advise (family) that immediate family will be taken care of first. May not be possible for other members. (Identify immediate family).
  - b. Contact IAFF Local Union Office for assistance
4. Arrange transportation for immediate family as needed.
5. Set up continuous detail at hospital for family assistance, if injured personnel is critical, but is not deceased.
6. Determine desired funeral home to receive the body.

Funeral Home: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Funeral Director: \_\_\_\_\_

\*Arrange transportation to funeral home for immediate family.

7. Get names, telephone numbers, and locations of all immediate family.
8. Advise family of need for an autopsy. Have necessary hospital forms signed.
9. Have "Release of medical information" forms signed by legal party.
10. Contact fire department emergency unit to transport body to morgue.



11. With the physician's assistance, contact coroner's office for:
  - a. Autopsy
  - b. Toxicology Report
  - c. Statement of cause of death, if no autopsy is to be done (medical examiner's report)
12. Prepare news medical release. (Assign PIO for the incident)
  - a. Hold news release until all the family has been notified and has left the hospital. Release employee(s) data sheet with departmental photographs. Include brief details of the incident. Notify media that the investigation normally requires 60-90 days.
  - b. Call the watch commander at fire communications and release information to the news media, general public, and engine houses. On the engine house notification, use the vocal alarm. Include in the engine house message that all flags will be placed in the half staff position immediately (daylight hours only) and that black tape is to be placed over the badges.
  - c. Contact general services and arrange for black bunting at selected fire stations, fire headquarters, and various sites as needed.
13. Remain at the hospital until all family members have left.
14. Contact the City Hall OJI Office and advise them of the death. Determine who is to contact State Department of Labor Compliance Office. This must be done verbally, immediately followed with written notification as soon as possible.
15. Contact:
  - a. Public Safety Officers Benefits Office in Washington, DC (PSOB/LEAA) (202) 307-0635 for application for Federal Death Benefits
  - b. National Fire Academy phone (301) 447-1272
  - c. IAFF (through local union office)
  - d. International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) (703) 273-0911
16. Initiate life insurance benefits by calling insurance providers. (Note: Check beneficiary prior to discussing this with family.)

Beneficiary: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

**INVESTIGATIVE PROCEDURES**

17. Set up Fire Service Directors Investigative Team: Outline departmental objectives of investigation. Assign team leader and have team meet within 24 hours of the incident.
  - a. \_\_\_\_\_
  - b. \_\_\_\_\_



- c. \_\_\_\_\_ d. \_\_\_\_\_  
e. \_\_\_\_\_ f. \_\_\_\_\_

**18. Document:**

- a. Get pictures and video of SCENE (fire investigations)
- b. Get written statements from all individuals on the scene within 24 hours. These statements are confidential and are not to be reviewed by any individual including supervisors. These documents are to be sealed and turned over to the investigative team leader.
- c. Get printed chronological from communications.
- d. Contact Federal Emergency Management Agency for assistance. Request assistance from the U.S. Fire Administration. If needed, request assistance from NIOSH or State Department of Labor, etc.
- e. Get investigative team members together.
  1. Go to death scene and video/take pictures.
  2. Designate individual to draw diagram/sketch of structure involved (floor plans, etc.) for investigative team charts.
  3. View and video all personal protective equipment (including SCBA).
  4. Prepare SCBA(s) for shipment to NIOSH for evaluation if necessary.
  5. Review chronological report.
  6. Review all written statements. Note, send form letter.
  7. Set up interview teams for all companies on the scene.
  8. Interview all individuals on scene (tape record).
  9. Reconstruct scene from statements. Have diagrams and designs of fire scene for interviews.
  10. Write report.

**Funeral Services**

19. Immediately contact all funeral coordinators:
- a. Color guard
  - b. Funeral coordination
  - c. Appropriate personnel assigned for all funeral vehicles and coordination of funeral procession.
  - d. Other bureaus as needed to assist in parking control, etc.
  - e. Coordinate with local police department for police assistance and involvement in services
    - 1) 21-gun salute
    - 2) Taps
    - 3) Motorcycle escort
  - f. Cars for the funeral procession



- 20. Coordinate with coroner's office and funeral home for release of body.
- 21. Contact funeral home and arrange family meeting.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

- 22. Meet family at funeral home. Advise family to have the following items with them:
  - a. Have burial suit or uniform.
  - b. Have necessary family information in advance.
  - c. Arrange for picture of deceased to be placed on casket if closed services are required.
- 23. Determine amount of line-of-duty services to be incorporated into funeral.
  - a. Apparatus to carry casket
  - b. American flag for casket
  - c. Color guard
  - d. Honor guard
  - e. Bagpipes at services
  - f. 21-gun salute at cemetery
  - g. Taps to be played at cemetery
  - h. Police escort (motorcycles)
  - i. Fire escort at hearse (motors): \_\_\_\_\_
  - j. 100-foot aerial ladders to be set up at: \_\_\_\_\_
  - k. Church: \_\_\_\_\_ Cemetery: \_\_\_\_\_ On Route: \_\_\_\_\_
  - l. Memorials instead of flowers
  - m. Other Items: \_\_\_\_\_
- 24. Determine if news media will be allowed inside the church during services.  
Yes: \_\_\_\_\_ No: \_\_\_\_\_
- 25. Notify pallbearers (arrange a car for them). Arrive one (1) hour early at services.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_



8. \_\_\_\_\_

Honorary pallbearers: Arrive one (1) hour early at services.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_ 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_ 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_ 8. \_\_\_\_\_

26. Ushers: ten (10). Arrive one (1) hour early for seating.

27. Determine dates of:

a. Body ready for viewing: date \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

b. Services: date \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

c. Burial: date \_\_\_\_\_ time \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

28. Contact fire personnel with all information for the following:

- a. Ordering flowers
- b. Administration need-to-know information

29. Contact fire communications with all information for VOCAL ALARM announcements that include uniform, memorials, black tape on badges.  
NOTE: See Operations Manual for Funeral Protocols, Class I Death Funeral section.

30. Order casket size flag and white gloves for pallbearers, honor guard and dignitaries. This flag is not the standard 5'x7'. Gloves should be returned to logistics after the services.



31. Contact apparatus maintenance shop to have appropriate apparatus prepared for the funeral procession.
32. Contact funeral home for casket rollers and hooks for the funeral apparatus.
33. Determine who (what company) will drive apparatus in the funeral procession. Contact officer in charge and advise him to coordinate with apparatus maintenance shop chief.
34. Determine routes from funeral home, church and cemetery to go by engine houses. Notify the following:
  - a. Police Department Coordinator (motorcycle escorts)
  - b. Funeral Home Director
  - c. Fire Director and all other necessary fire personnel
  - d. Any other appropriate bureaus
35. Determine order (placement of funeral procession vehicles and apparatus. Other represented agencies will be put into the funeral procession. (Cars only, no apparatus from other municipalities).
36. Contact engine houses located in funeral procession route:
  - a. Engine houses #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ along the route to be draped in black
  - b. Aerial equipment at raised position
  - c. Lights on all equipment turned on
  - d. All personnel in Class A uniform
  - e. All personnel at attention when procession passes their location.
  - f. Fire apparatus NOT in the procession route, BUT in the territory, may move to an intersection of the procession route with lights flashing and stand at attention while the funeral procession passes.
  - g. Companies to contact #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_ #\_\_\_\_\_
37. Get coordinators for pallbearers \_\_; color guard \_\_; honor guard \_\_
  - a. Get white gloves to coordinators
  - b. Arrange cars for transportation (color guard and pallbearers)
  - c. Assure that honor guard will be in place
38. Coordinate between minister, fire department chaplain and funeral director for schedule of services. (Check for continuity with prior decisions.)
39. Contact bagpipe player if available. Provide transportation for bagpipe player.
40. Advise the mayor and fire director of any expected participation in the services, such as speaking, presenting the American flag, etc.
41. Contact all coordinators and schedule for all to go to the church and cemetery for planning of the following:
  - a. Seating arrangements for funeral services
    - a. Uniformed fire personnel
    - b. Dignitaries
    - c. Fire union officials



- d. Other agencies or visitors
  - e. News media
  - b. Placement and movement of
    - a. Pallbearers
    - b. Color guard
    - c. Honorary pallbearers
  - c. Placement of vehicles in the funeral procession
42. Arrange meeting with fire director and all ministers/coordinators to confirm that all aspects of the services are coordinated.
43. Keep a list for thank you messages from the fire director and mayor.
44. Coordinate with local IAFF union for reception following funeral.



|  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>G.O. Number:</b> 1-16                               | <b>Effective Date:</b> July 6, 1999 |
| <b>Section:</b> Organization and Administration        |                                     |
| <b>Subject:</b> Fire/EMS Department Funeral Procedures |                                     |
| <b>By Order of the Fire Chief:</b> Ronald J. Siarnicki |                                     |

I. Purpose

To establish the departmental policies and procedures for conducting fire/EMS department funerals. This General Order should serve as a guide to conducting full fire/EMS department funerals. However, at no time will this General Order take precedent over the wishes of the family. The level of involvement will be predetermined based on the criteria set forth in this order and the desires of the family.

II. Goal

The goal of this order is to establish a guideline and proper procedures for conducting fire/EMS department funerals and to properly and reverently conduct a service worthy of the service given by a member of the department. As stated above, the wishes of family members will always take precedent over any policy set forth by this order. This order should be used to set up a framework to execute the events that must take place in order to properly conduct a funeral.

The coordination and development of a funeral service can be very difficult, both physically and emotionally. There are many factors that should be considered when preparing a funeral service. As all emergencies are uniquely different, the framework with which we work in remains the same. With that in mind, the Incident Command System should be utilized in the coordination and development of a funeral service. Each service will be different, but the same framework can be utilized in order to ensure a proper and efficient service.

III. Criteria

The department will recognize three levels of services when conducting funerals:

A. Line-of-Duty Death

A line-of-duty death will receive the full honors and respect befitting a member who lost his/her life in the performance of his/her duties. A line-of-duty death will generally include a fire/EMS department memorial service, a casket watch by the honor guard, full dress uniforms for as many sworn personnel as possible, uniformed fire/EMS personnel ushers, appropriate transportation of the casket, coordination of transportation for family members, a graveside ceremony with



color guard, flag fold and ladder arches. The service will reflect the wishes of the family.

**B. Non-Line-of-Duty death**

A non-line-of-duty death is a death that did not occur while the member was actively involved in a departmental activity. This can include active members, and retired/inactive chief officers of the department. This type of service will include: a fire/EMS department memorial service, honor guard participation, graveside ceremony, and the formation of arches.

**C. Fire/EMS Department Representation**

When a death occurs to an inactive/retired member of the department and the family has indicated that they wish to have fire/EMS department representation the fire chief will assign a small delegation to represent the fire/EMS department. This will generally include a fire/EMS department chaplain and major or battalion chief/volunteer division chief, and possibly representation from the honor guard.

**IV. Implementation**

Should a death occur, the office of the fire chief will be notified of the death (in accordance with Career Service Directive #41). The type of service is determined as outlined in Section III, and in keeping with the desires of the family. The fire chief may issue "memorial orders," if appropriate, and any other special instructions.

If needed, a funeral officer will be assigned and any additional sectors will be assigned as soon as possible.

**A. Command**

The fire chief is ultimately in charge of a fire/EMS department funeral. He/she will appoint a funeral officer to coordinate the services on his/her behalf.

The funeral officer is responsible for the overall coordination and development of the funeral. He/she will ensure that all of the sectors are assigned and that each sector is coordinated to ensure an efficient service. Customarily, the funeral officer will provide updates to the fire chief, direct the sectors and officers, keep each sector accountable on progress of tasks and assignments, and authorize the addition or release of personnel to a given sector. The funeral officer will conduct an initial meeting to assign sectors and assignments.

When assigning sectors and assignments, the funeral officer should be cognizant that the home company may want to take on a great deal of the assignments.



Though the wishes and desires of the home company should influence the service, they may be tasked with many events that could preclude some of the membership from participating in the actual service. Ideally, another company should offer aid to the home company and provide assistance. This would allow all the members of the home company to remain involved without having to miss out on any part of the ceremonies. The partner company may also serve as a fill-in crew for the affected company. In cases where another company is unable to assist, the funeral officer can assign personnel to accomplish this task.

**B. Sectors**

Each sector officer is responsible for providing command with progress reports that include:

1. Current information about the needs and accomplishments.
2. Completion of tasks and assignments.
3. Other pertinent information.

Each sector should be assigned to an officer who can bring the resources needed to accomplish a given task (attachment #1). The sectors needed for a funeral service can include:

|                           |                              |                   |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Funeral Officer           | Cemetery Site Officer        | Logistics Officer |
| Protocol Officer          | EMS Officer                  | Parking Officer   |
| Family Liaison Officer    | VIP Officer                  | Ushers Officer    |
| Chaplain                  | Reception/Food Officer       |                   |
| Procession Officer        | Support Group Officer        |                   |
| Honor Guard               | Funeral Home Liaison Officer |                   |
| Press Information Officer | Audio/Visual Officer         |                   |
| Transportation Officer    | Printing Officer             |                   |

**V. Considerations/Arrangements**

The funeral officer and the sector officers are responsible to coordinate the fire/EMS services at the funeral home/place of worship. Considerations include: fire/EMS department memorial service, firefighter formations, musical arrangements, readings, eulogies, special remarks, procession, hearse, services at the burial site, crossed arches, sounding of Taps, bagpiper, bell toll, honor guard, flag fold and presentation of flag.

**A. Arrangements may include (attachment #2)**

1. Honor Guard Stand-By—As needed dependant upon protocols and level of service
2. Active pallbearers: six personnel
3. Honorary pallbearers—family, company officers, retirees, etc.
4. Funeral Detail—uniformed personnel



5. Bugler
6. Flag for the casket
7. Provide information to department personnel to carry out their roles in the funeral
8. Survey the areas of the funeral service and make the needed provision of placement of attending personnel and fire/EMS equipment. Provide information and maps.
9. Designate a room for the family and dignitaries, rooms for honor guard preparation
10. If needed, designate a meeting area away from the funeral site for all uniformed personnel to meet. The group can then march to the funeral home to act as a funeral detail.
11. Badge covers for uniformed personnel
12. Designate a vehicle for casket transportation
13. Coordination of multiple joint funerals
14. Maps for out-of-town fire/EMS service personnel. This map should include: locations of fire station, funeral home, church, assembly areas, parking areas, auxiliary parking areas, procession route, cemetery and gravesite, and any other information deemed necessary.
15. Police department: traffic, procession, and parking assistance
16. Photography
17. Media
18. Transportation for family and guests

All areas of responsibility will need close monitoring with the funeral officer and the family liaison to ensure that the family's desires are being met.



## Fire/EMS Department Funeral Sectors

Funeral Service for: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

| SECTOR                       | ASSIGNED TO | NOTES |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Funeral Officer              |             |       |
| Cemetery Site Officer        |             |       |
| Protocol Officer             |             |       |
| EMS Officer                  |             |       |
| Family Liaison Officer       |             |       |
| VIP Officer                  |             |       |
| Chaplain                     |             |       |
| Reception/Food Officer       |             |       |
| Procession Officer           |             |       |
| Support Group Officer        |             |       |
| Honor Guard                  |             |       |
| Funeral Home Liaison Officer |             |       |
| Press Information Officer    |             |       |
| Audio/Visual Officer         |             |       |
| Transportation Officer       |             |       |
| Printing Officer             |             |       |
| Parking Officer              |             |       |
| Logistics Officer            |             |       |
| Ushers Officer               |             |       |
|                              |             |       |
|                              |             |       |
|                              |             |       |



## Fire/EMS Department Funeral Guidelines

\*\*\*\*\*Refer to General Order 1-16 for appropriate level of involvement\*\*\*\*\*

Funeral Service for: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

|     | ITEM  | ASSIGNED TO | NOTES |
|-----|---|-------------|-------|
| 1.  | <b>Honor Guard Stand By</b><br>As needed dependant upon protocols and level of service. |             |       |
| 2.  | <b>Active Pallbearers</b><br>Six Personnel  |             |       |
| 3.  | <b>Honorary Pallbearers</b><br>Family, Company Officer, Retirees, etc                   |             |       |
| 4.  | <b>Funeral Detail</b><br>Uniformed Personnel  |             |       |
| 5.  | <b>Bugler</b>   |             |       |
| 6.  | <b>Flag for the Casket</b>  |             |       |
| 7.  | <b>Briefings</b><br>Departmental personnel role in the funeral                          |             |       |
| 8.  | <b>Survey areas</b>   |             |       |
|     | funeral service   |             |       |
|     | placement of attending personnel  |             |       |
|     | fire/EMS equipment  |             |       |
|     | provide information and maps  |             |       |
| 9.  | <b>Designate rooms</b>  |             |       |
|     | family and dignitaries  |             |       |
|     | honor guard preparation   |             |       |
| 10. | <b>Meeting area</b><br>away from funeral site for all uniformed personnel to assembly   |             |       |
| 11. | <b>Badge Covers</b>   |             |       |
| 12. | <b>Casket transportation – vehicle</b>  |             |       |





## Contact Numbers

| Name | Affiliation | Pager | Phone |
|------|-------------|-------|-------|
|      |             |       |       |
|      |             |       |       |
|      |             |       |       |
|      |             |       |       |
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## Contents

*This guide is intended to assist fire departments in planning and conducting an investigation of a line-of-duty death. The same procedures are applicable to other situations that require a thorough investigation with a focus on occupational safety and health, including serious accidents, injuries and situation where a death or serious injury is narrowly averted.*

- Introduction
- Objectives
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## *Introduction*

Investigation of a line-of-duty death of a member is one of the most difficult and important activities that must be conducted by a fire department. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that the investigation must usually be conducted under extremely stressful circumstances and often under pressure for the rapid release of information. It is important for every fire department to have a plan and to be prepared to conduct such an investigation.

The procedures of a line-of-duty death investigation can and should be applied to other situations, particularly accidents that result in serious injuries, or incidents that could have resulted in death or injury under slightly different circumstances. A “close call” should be interpreted as a warning to prevent the same situation from happening again and to ensure that all protective systems are adequate and functional.

A thorough investigation will require both time and effort. It is important to discover, identify, research and fully document every causal factor or potential causal factor. The investigation should focus on factual information. It should present the facts of what happened, identify the causal factors and recommend appropriate corrective actions. In many cases there will be conflicting theories and opinions about the incident. There may also be a number of very different accounts from witnesses and individuals who were involved. The investigation should follow up on every lead or theory to discover the actual facts, as precisely as they can be determined.

The visible product of an investigation is a report, usually in printed form, including photographs, illustrations and diagrams to fully document the incident and the conclusions and recommendations that are reached through the investigative process. The printed document is often supplemented by videotapes, audiotapes, and physical evidence. This official report document may be accompanied by materials that will assist in presenting the report to a live audience. The most important application of an investigation, however, is the manner in which the conclusions and recommendations are used and applied to prevent future accidents and injuries.

It may be necessary to work with outside agencies or to involve independent experts to assist with the investigation of an incident. The involvement of other organizations and need for specialized assistance will depend on the nature of the incident, legal or statutory considerations, the capabilities of the fire department, and other circumstantial factors. Several organizations that could be involved in an investigation are listed in this document.



## *Objectives*

The investigation of a line-of-duty death may serve several different purposes. The most important objective, in every case, is to prevent the same situation from occurring in the future. We should never be satisfied until we can be sure that we are doing everything in our power to prevent accidents, injuries, occupational illnesses and line-of-duty deaths.

### **Primary Objectives**

1. To determine the direct and indirect causal factors which resulted in a line-of-duty death, particularly those factors that could be used to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature, including:
  - Identifying inadequacies involving apparatus, equipment, protective clothing, standard operating procedures, supervision, training, or performance
  - Identifying situations that involve an unacceptable risk
  - Identifying previously unknown or unanticipated hazards
2. To ensure that the lessons learned from the investigation are effectively communicated to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature. (When appropriate, this should include dissemination of the information through fire service organization and professional publications.)

### **Additional Objectives**

3. To satisfy the requirements of the Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB) Program and other entitlements (see pages 31-40 of this manual).
4. To identify potential areas of negligence and causal factors that could result in criminal prosecution or civil litigation.
5. To ensure that the incident and all related events are fully documented and evidence is preserved to provide for additional investigation or legal actions at a later date.
6. To provide factual information to assist those involved who are trying to understand the events they experienced.
7. To provide the information to other individuals and organizations that are involved in the cause of fire service occupational safety and health.



## *Complicating Factors*

Investigations are often complicated by factors and situations that could cause the investigation team to lose sight of the true objectives and damage the credibility of the completed report. The investigators must have a firm understanding of their mission and must have the support and independence necessary to perform a thorough and unbiased investigation.

The investigation team may be placed in the uncomfortable position of investigating the actions of friends, co-workers and superior officers. There may be pressure to find a particular individual or one isolated act or omission responsible for the fatal incident. There may also be a desire to absolve an individual of responsibility or to protect the reputation of the fire department. Emotional reactions are natural when a fatality occurs and they can be magnified when accusations are made or when an individual feels personal responsibility. The investigation should attempt to separate the emotions from the facts and present an unbiased analyses of the incident.

The mission of the investigation team must be directed and limited to finding facts and developing recommendations that are based only on the facts. Any instruction that attempts to alter the mission is inappropriate and any suggestion that a bias or cover-up is involved is a serious accusation.

A report that is based on factual information should speak for itself. The facts should be documented and available for review and the conclusions and recommendations should be clearly supported. In most cases a series of contributing factors will be found, leading to a number of recommendations.

Accusations of negligent acts and determinations of personal responsibility or liability are beyond the scope of a fact-finding report. If the report presents facts that lead to a conclusion of this nature, it is up to administrative, regulatory, or legal bodies to initiate appropriate actions.

There are times when significant facts cannot be determined with certainty. The actions of the victim may have been based upon circumstances that only the victim could describe. Other factors may be subject to conflicting theories or contradictory evidence. In these situations it is up to the investigation team to investigate as thoroughly as possible and to differentiate, in the report, between established facts and speculation or expert opinion. A report should never be based on unsupported assumptions.

A further complication may arise if there are any suggestions of criminal responsibility for an incident. In these situations it is essential to work closely



## LODD Response Plan

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with the appropriate law enforcement agencies to coordinate activities and share information during the investigation. This will depend on the nature of the suspicion and the relationship between the investigating agencies. In most cases it is possible to develop a positive working relationship that allows the investigation of both aspects of the situation to proceed.



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## *Investigation Team*

An investigation of a line-of-duty death is not a job for one individual. A thorough investigation will usually require at least 3-5 individuals and may involve a larger team. The fire department should have a plan that identifies an investigation team that will be immediately activated when an incident occurs. Designated team members should respond to the scene of the incident to begin the investigative procedures as soon as possible.

The plan should identify more than one potential team leader and several potential team members. The assignment process should be planned and documented based on the availability of designated individuals and particular circumstances of the incident. The team members should be immediately reassigned from their regular duties to devote their full efforts to the investigation. In larger departments there may be a duty roster system or a primary designated individual and number of potential alternates. Smaller departments may plan to work together, assembling a team from a mutual aid group or from more than one agency.

The ideal team leader should be thoroughly familiar with fire department operations, with health and safety issues, and with investigative techniques. Because few individuals possess true expertise in all three of these essential areas, the team should be assembled to combine the abilities of different individuals who can contribute to the project. The fire department safety officer should be a member of the team and may be the best choice to be the team leader. The team leader should be the individual who is most capable of managing and leading a group effort with these and other needed abilities.

## *Investigative Authority*

One of the most important considerations in appointing the team leader is to delegate the necessary authority to conduct a complete and thorough investigation. While the fire chief has the ability to assign and delegate the authority to any member of the department, a team leader who holds command or management level rank can usually function more efficiently in gaining cooperation and coordinating team efforts. The individual should also be respected for expertise, impartiality and conscientious work. No other officer should have the authority to interfere with the investigation.



## *Team Members*

A list of potential team members should be maintained, based on individual abilities and qualifications. At least one member of the team should be trained and qualified in investigative procedures, preferably with specialized training in accident and injury investigation. A trained and qualified fire investigator or accident investigator can provide the other team members with guidance on the proper collection and preservation of evidence, managing interviews and preparing investigative reports.

The team should include members who are very familiar with the type of activities and hazards that were involved in the incident, with the safety procedures that should apply to the situation, and with the organization and operations of the department. Additional capabilities that may be needed include photographers, video specialists, and experts in other areas that may apply to the particular situation. Some of these individuals may not need to be assigned to the team on a full time basis if their skills are available when needed.

It may not be possible to find all of these qualifications within the fire department. For example, a traffic accident involving fire apparatus will require an individual who is qualified to investigate accidents involving heavy trucks. This individual may have to be “borrowed” from a state or local police agency or it may be necessary to contract with a private investigator.

One of the first concerns of the team leader will be to identify the individuals or the particular capabilities that will be needed to investigate the incident. The plan should identify individuals who would be called upon, depending on the specific situation. If the plan does not identify anyone with expertise in the particular area of concern, one of the highest priorities will be to locate and engage the services of a qualified individual. The plan should provide a mechanism to quickly arrange for the services of any outside assistance that could be needed. The local law enforcement agency may be able to provide valuable assistance, particularly in managing and documenting evidence.

The plan should provide for the immediate response of a designated or provisional team leader and at least one or two additional team members when a fatal incident occurs. The remaining team members should be reassigned from their regular duties to the investigation team within 12-24 hours.



## *Immediate Actions*

There are several actions that should be implemented immediately when a line-of-duty death or a serious accident occurs.

### **The Incident Commander should direct the following actions:**

#### **1. Isolate the Scene**

The scene of the incident should be secured and guarded; only those individuals who have a specific reason to enter should be allowed inside the perimeter. An officer and as many members as are necessary should be assigned to secure the scene. Police assistance may be necessary to establish and maintain scene security. Senior officers should respect the need to preserve the scene for the investigation team and not use their privilege of rank to violate the perimeter.

The sooner that isolation is implemented, the easier it will be to investigate the scene and to account for any disruptions of the physical evidence. The only reasons to violate this rule would be to provide medical treatment in an attempt to save the victim or to control a fire that could destroy the evidence. If an obviously dead body is present, the scene should be left undisturbed for the investigators. The scene should be maintained until all physical evidence has been documented, photographed and measured.

#### **2. Impound Evidence**

All items that could have a bearing on the investigation should be impounded and protected until they can be turned over to the investigation team. In the case of a fire fatality, items such as protective clothing and breathing apparatus will be extremely important in the investigation. Physical evidence should be handled in the same manner as evidence from an arson investigation or criminal investigation. A qualified fire investigator would usually be the most appropriate team member to manage the physical evidence.

Every reasonable effort should always be made to rescue, treat, and transport a victim to a hospital, if there is any possibility of preserving life. In this process protective clothing, breathing apparatus, and other items may be removed from the victim and could be easily misplaced. The Incident Commander should immediately assign someone to take custody of any items that are removed from the secured area and to turn them over to the investigation team. Any necessary movement of evidence should be noted and recorded.

#### **3. Document the Condition of Safety Equipment**

Information relating to the performance of protective clothing, breathing apparatus and other safety equipment is extremely significant in fatalities that occur during fire suppression operations and hazardous materials incidents. This



information should be documented by written notes and supported by photographs. If the victim must be moved, or if it is necessary to remove protective clothing and equipment before the investigation team arrives, it is important to note the condition of pertinent items.

### **Questions on the Condition of Safety Equipment\***

\*Note: This list would apply to a firefighter who died in a fire suppression incident. A similar set of concerns would apply to any other type of situation.

#### ***Breathing Apparatus***

Was the victim wearing SCBA?

Was the face piece in place?

Was there pressure remaining in the air cylinder?

Were the valves in their normal positions?

Were straps and other components in their normal use configuration?

Was there any visible damage to the SCBA?

Were any components missing?

Where were they found?

How old was the SCBA?

When was the last test?

If needed, were the repairs made?

#### ***Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) and Radio***

Was the victim carrying a PASS device?

Was it turned on, and how do you know?

Was it functioning when the victim was found?

Did the victim have a portable radio or any other equipment?

Where was it found?

Was it in operable condition?

#### ***Protective Clothing***

Was the victim wearing full protective clothing?

Was any protective clothing damaged?

Had the victim removed any item of protective clothing?

Where was it found?

Did the victim have/wear all the required personal protective equipment?

### **The investigation team should implement the following steps:**

#### **4. Photograph the Scene**

The scene should be diagrammed and photographed in the same manner that a crime scene would be documented. Large color prints are the preferred method of documentation. If the fire department does not have a qualified photographer, a police photographer should be requested to provide this service, under the



direction of the team leader. All photographs should be delivered to the team leader.

**5. Arrange for an Autopsy**

An autopsy should be conducted for every line-of-duty death. If the death is fire-related, the medical examiner should be requested to look particularly at blood gases, including carboxyhemoglobin levels and other products of combustion. An alcohol level test is also necessary to meet the requirements of the Public Safety Officer Benefits Program (see pages 31-40 of this manual).

**6. Identify Witnesses**

It is often impossible for the investigation team to interview all of the witnesses at the scene or immediately after the incident. The immediate priorities should be to obtain essential information from individuals who were directly involved and to identify witnesses for later follow up.

## *Second-Stage Actions*

The immediate actions will generally require several hours and should be conducted according to a documented and established plan. The second stage will usually begin on the following day, when the full investigation team meets to plan the remainder of the investigation and to make assignments for different functions. It is up to the team leader to identify the resources that will be needed and to establish a plan to manage the investigation. There will be information to gather and analyze, witnesses to be interviewed, references to be checked and a report to be prepared.

**7. Conduct Interviews**

Full interviews should be conducted with every fire department member involved in the event. At a major incident this may have to be confined to those who were at the scene at the time of the fatal event or who were in any way involved with the victim before or during the event. All interviews should be recorded, with the consent of the witness (record that, too), and notes should be documented. The list of witnesses to interview will often grow as different leads are followed. Anyone who has information that could be significant should be encouraged to inform the investigation team and every contact should be interviewed, including members of the general public.

One objective should be to locate and interview anyone who makes a statement reported in the news media. These statements often confuse the issues in the early stages of an investigation; finding the person who made a statement is usually the best way to determine its accuracy. The team should obtain and review copies of all news broadcasts and published accounts of the incident.



The reporters themselves should be interviewed, if their reports suggest some factor not consistent with the information found by the team. These individuals should be approached as any other witness—by requesting their assistance in determining exactly what happened.

### **8. Develop a Time Line**

The compilation of records, radio tapes and other data should allow the team to establish a basic time line for the incident. The time line establishes the sequence of events chronologically, sometimes to the second. Additional information should be added to the time line as it is obtained, until the time line can be used to fully describe:

*...who did what, and who saw what,  
...at what location, and at what time?*

This is one of the basic building blocks of an investigation process. In establishing a time line it is important to synchronize the time base for different records. Misleading information may result if times are compared from different sources, assuming that the clocks were synchronized at the time of the incident. The investigation team should verify the times that are recorded for a verifiable simultaneous event and apply the appropriate correction factor to all other time measurements.

### **9. Examine Physical Evidence**

All physical evidence, including protective clothing and equipment that was impounded at the scene, should be thoroughly examined by qualified personnel. All findings should be thoroughly documented and photographed. It may be necessary to have certain items inspected or tested by qualified experts or by testing laboratories. It is important to maintain the chain of custody for all physical evidence as it is examined by different individuals and to ensure that reports are obtained and the items are returned to a secure area.

### **10. Research Documents**

All existing departmental standard operating procedures, training materials, and similar sources of guidance that would apply to the situation should be reviewed to determine:

1. How the situation “should” have been handled.
2. Whether or not it was handled in the expected manner.
3. Whether or not this would have had an impact on the outcome.

Records should be examined to determine if the individuals involved had received the proper training in the relevant topics.

All applicable NFPA standards, ANSI standards, OSHA regulations and similar information that could relate to the events should also be studied. NFPA annual reports on firefighter deaths and injuries should be consulted to determine if



similar situations have occurred in other departments and the conclusions from those reports should be compiled. If possible, the full reports from those incidents should be obtained.

Where equipment or apparatus is involved, specifications and maintenance records should be obtained. Operators should be asked if any problems were previously noted and a determination should be made if required inspections and repairs had been completed on schedule. Talk to the maintenance crew.

### **11. Expert Assistance**

There are several situations that will require the assistance of qualified experts. Apparatus failures, particularly those that involve aerial devices, should be examined by mechanical engineers and metallurgists who are qualified to determine the specific cause of the failure. Breathing apparatus should be examined and tested, if it was involved in any manner (see Appendix B).

Expert assistance is available in many different areas. If the needed expertise is not available within the fire department, it is an excellent investment to find the best individual to assist the team in specific areas or to be part of the entire investigation. Where an incident has become extremely controversial, it may be advisable to have a recognized independent investigator participate in the investigation or review the evidence to develop an independent report.

### **12. Obtain Legal Advice**

Legal issues will involve nearly every aspect of a line-of-duty death investigation. Where potential criminal action is a possibility, the safety investigation should be independent, but must be coordinated with the appropriate law enforcement agencies. Issues of potential liability, including product liability and possible violations of occupational health and safety laws, will be a consideration in almost every case. These factors should not be allowed to restrict the investigation, but it is advisable to consult an attorney and to have the report reviewed by the fire department's attorney before it is released.



## *Analysis & Report Development*

There is no magic formula for how to compile and analyze all of the data necessary to conduct a thorough investigation and prepare a report. It requires time and effort to fully understand, prepare, and develop a comprehensive report on a complicated situation. The team members should work toward a full understanding of the events that occurred, the responsibilities and actions of key individuals, the factors that made the department vulnerable to a fatal incident, and the actions that should have been taken or should be implemented now to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

Every component of the “puzzle” should be followed back to its root cause. For instance, the evidence may suggest that an individual was not properly trained to handle a particular situation. This should be followed back to determine if the training was available, if the individual was trained, was trained in an improper procedure, or had taken action that was inconsistent with training that had been provided. This could lead to a recommendation for refresher training, for training in a new area, for a change in the procedure that training is based upon, or for a system to ensure that members attend all training classes.

Every contributing or suspected contributing factor should be followed back to a conclusion and tied in with all of the other factors to develop a complete report. The investigation team should continue its efforts until the team members are satisfied that they fully understand what happened, why it happened, and what steps need to be taken to prevent a similar occurrence in the future.

The information should be compiled into a written document, supported by photographs, diagrams, and supporting data to fully present the facts of the incident. Additional supporting information should be maintained in the investigation files.



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## *Report Presentation*

The report should be presented to the fire chief as a completed document. In most cases, the presentation of the document should occur at a meeting with all of the team members present. The team leader should present an overview of the report, including all conclusions and recommendations, using audio-visual aids to illustrate the presentation. The fire chief and other staff members should be prepared to ask questions of the team members.

The report should also be presented to the fire department Health and Safety Committee. In most cases the majority of the investigation team members will be members of the Health and Safety Committee or directly involved with the committee's functions. The Health and Safety Committee should be involved in the development of the investigation procedure and plan.

The Health and Safety Committee should review the full report, paying particular attention to the recommendations to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature. As a representative body, the Health and Safety Committee adds credibility to the investigative process and to the final report. The committee should be asked to endorse the recommendations of the investigation team. The Health and Safety Committee should have the option to request the fire chief to refer the report back to the investigation team, if the report is considered inaccurate or inadequate or if the recommendations are not feasible. The ultimate responsibility is the fire chief's.

A special presentation of the report for the members who were involved in the incident should be considered. This should be discussed with the critical incident stress team to determine if there are individuals who would have a difficult time attending such a presentation. In most cases, the presentation and discussion of the report with the members involved will help to bring closure to the situation. The final report should then be released to the department. This may involve printing and distributing a document or a presentation by the team at a training session. Every member of the department should see the final report or a presentation of its major points.

Under most state laws, the release of the completed report makes it a public document, accessible to the news media and any interested party. Supporting documents and evidence that remains in the investigative file may or may not be accessible. If there is a known media interest in the report, copies should be made available to reporters who have requested it. Copies should also be sent to organizations that are involved in fire fighter health and safety, including the United States Fire Administration, National Fire Protection Association, and International Association of Fire Chiefs. Copies should also be sent to other fire



departments that have requested information on the incident and to all individuals and organizations that provided assistance in the investigation. (see Appendix A)

### **Restricting Release**

While one of the basic principles contained in the procedure is the value of conducting an open investigation and sharing the results for educational purposes, there will be cases where the possibility of litigation being brought against the department is a major concern. In these cases the attorneys representing the fire department will probably be strongly opposed to releasing any potentially damaging information. Anything that the investigation team finds in its investigation could potentially be used against the department and, under litigation discovery procedures, the department can be forced to release all observations and reports, including all evidence compiled in the investigation. The department may be forced to release information even if it has proven to be inaccurate through the internal investigation. There may be certain privileges or other restrictions regarding release of the report. These privileges may arise from privacy laws and be applicable to the description of the decedent and bar release to any but the decedent's representatives, or bars release if the report bears upon a criminal investigation, or under certain limited circumstances if the report is produced as a result of a critical self-analysis designed to identify methods of improving operations. Any restrictions on the release of the report should be coordinated with the department's attorney.

The concern over discovery should never restrain a fire department from taking corrective action to avoid another incident. The courts have generally found that taking action based upon knowledge gained from an adverse incident to prevent a recurrence of an event is not an admission of responsibility for the original event. Conversely, corrective action which was recommended, but not implemented, prior to the incident may be construed to be evidence of negligence and possibly even gross negligence. The decision of when to release final report will have to be determined through discussions between the fire chief and the attorneys.

### **News Media**

The news media often generate an atmosphere of tension around an investigation, fueled by the speculation and accusations that may surround an incident. The possibility that an individual may have been negligent or that some inappropriate act may have caused a death makes an excellent news story, particularly when fire department members are willing to be quoted. These same feelings may come to the surface when an investigation is perceived as a "cover-up" or a "witch hunt," which does not help any situation.

Media inquiries should be directed to the team leader or the department's Public Information Officer (PIO). While the investigation is in progress, it is appropriate



## LODD Response Plan

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to provide information on how the investigation is being conducted. No findings should be released until the full report is completed and reviewed. Certain information, such as the medical examiner's report, will be released as public records at the same time they are available to the investigation team.

When the time comes to release the final report, copies should be made available to the news media through the Public Information Officer (PIO). The PIO may recommend a press conference or for the team leader to be available for interviews, if there is a high level of news interest in the report.

In some cases it will be necessary to interview reporters who covered the incident as witnesses. News photographs and videotape have been valuable in several investigations and most news organizations will provide copies if the department will make an official request with assurance that they will be used only to support the investigation and subsequent training objectives.



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## *Cooperation With Other Agencies*

A line-of-duty death will require a high level of cooperation among the fire department investigation team and other agencies and organizations that will be involved in investigating or seeking information on the incident. This may include organizations that have a statutory authority or responsibility to investigate the incident and others that have legitimate reasons to be involved or to be interested in the results. There may also be organizations that are requested to assist the fire department investigation team. The best policy is to be extremely cooperative with other agencies that have a recognized reason to be involved in the investigation.

The investigation team assigned by the fire chief should be the authority having jurisdiction over the internal investigative process. If the incident is a fire, the investigation team should be on the scene before fire department operations are completed and should retain control of the scene as long as is necessary to conduct the investigation. If it is not a fire incident, control of the scene may fall within the jurisdiction of another agency and the investigation team will have to seek their cooperation to complete its on scene research.

If the incident is vehicle accident or a situation where some other agency has primary jurisdiction for the investigation, the team leader will have to establish a close liaison with that agency. Most public agencies will recognize the need for the fire department to conduct an investigation and will work cooperatively with the investigation team.

### **Fire Cause Investigator**

A fire cause investigation may be carried out concurrently with the safety investigation. If there is evidence of arson or other criminal acts, the situation will become much more complicated. The investigation of the safety factors involved in the incident must continue, while a high level of coordination is provided with fire investigation and law enforcement investigators. The fire department should retain custody of the scene until both sets of investigators have completed their examination and gathering of evidence.

The best approach to a situation that involves parallel fire cause and safety investigations is to meet with the law enforcement agencies and establish a cooperative relationship. There is no reason to compromise a fire cause investigation, particularly where there is a possibility that criminal activity is responsible for the death of a firefighter; nor should a criminal investigation stand in the way of the safety analysis. The two activities can sometimes be completed independently, where the area of origin and the area where the death occurred



are physically separate. In other cases the investigations can be mutually supportive.

Where a possible arson investigation is involved, the investigation team may have to carefully control evidence and limit the release of information until the law enforcement authority having jurisdiction is comfortable having it released. In most cases the criminal issues, particularly the specific cause of a fire, will not be critical issues in the safety investigation and the release of a safety report should not compromise a criminal prosecution.

### **Medical Examiner**

In most areas the medical examiner or coroner has the responsibility to make the official determination of cause of death and may send an investigator to the scene. The on-scene investigative responsibility is sometimes delegated to the police agency. These investigators are generally not experts at investigating fires or fire deaths and will usually be pleased to work with the fire department team to gather their information.

The remains of the deceased should be turned over to the medical examiner for an autopsy. The Public Safety Officer Benefits Program requires certain tests to be reported by the medical examiner and the list should be provided before the autopsy. The results of the autopsy should be incorporated into the investigation report.

The U.S. Fire Administration published a standard protocol for a firefighter autopsy in 1995. The publication focuses on the specific causal factors that are of concern in a line-of-duty death, particularly relating to toxicity and thermal injuries. It is a good idea to establish a relationship with the medical examiner when developing the investigation procedure, since the pace of events when an incident occurs makes this a poor time to explain the need for a special autopsy.

### **OSHA**

The employer is usually required to notify the state agency that is responsible for occupational safety and health, or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration of the federal government, of any line-of-duty death. (This will depend on the relationship between the state agency and the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration.) In most cases this agency will send an investigator to prepare a report on the incident. The orientation and approach of the investigating agency varies considerably from one state to another.

The role of OSHA is primarily to investigate the employer on behalf of the employee. The investigation is intended to determine if the employer was in violation of occupational safety and health laws in a manner that could have



caused or contributed to the death or injury of the employee. The employer is usually considered to be responsible for any violation, even if the victim's own negligence caused the accident, because it is presumed to be the employer's responsibility to ensure the employees comply with all health and safety regulations. The employer may be fined or subject to other penalties if violations are found.

The OSHA investigation may take one of several courses. The OSHA investigator will usually invite the union to participate in any discussion relating to the investigation as the representative of the employee. In many fire departments, the union and the department have a joint commitment to an effective health and safety program and share an equal interest in determining causal factors and corrective actions. Where there has been labor-management conflict, particularly over health and safety issues, an OSHA investigation may become a tense situation for management.

The OSHA investigator may not be extremely familiar with fire department standard operating procedures and may have to rely on fire department members to explain the standard operating procedures and to help interpret the regulations that apply. The best policy is usually to be open and cooperative, to demonstrate to the investigator that the department is not trying to conceal anything and is dedicated to a full and open investigation. In many cases, an open invitation to participate and to share in the conclusions of an investigation has created a positive relationship with OSHA investigators.

An OSHA investigator may insist on conducting a completely independent investigation or may refuse to work with management investigators. In some cases the investigator may appear to be committed to finding fault with the department for violations ranging from minor to major. This can create a very difficult situation for the investigation team and requires sound legal advice. This should not deter the fire department from conducting its own thorough and honest investigation and from being willing to share the results with other investigating agencies, although the city attorney may insist on reviewing any report before it is released.

Unfortunately, in some cases, the OSHA report has cited the fire department for violations that were insignificant or imagined because of investigators who were unfamiliar with fire department operations and applicable standards. In other cases major violations have been overlooked. These situations are often difficult to avoid and even more difficult to correct, particularly when the reports are released to the public.



### **Insurance Carrier**

Many cities and fire departments are insured by private insurance carriers, while others are self-insured and have their own loss management offices. The insurer's organization may be able to assist the team in obtaining expert assistance in particular areas or in conducting some forms of research to support the investigation. The insurer may also have training materials, guides, forms, and other materials that can assist the team in conducting or preparing to conduct an investigation.

In the case of a line-of-duty death the insurance carrier and/or the city's loss management department will almost definitely want to be kept informed on the progress of the investigation. The insurer may send its own investigation team, particularly where there will be a claim to be paid. The investigator who represents the department's insurance carrier should be supportive of a good internal investigation and should be looked upon as an asset to the investigation team. The extent of the insurer's direct involvement will depend on their relationship with the fire department and their expertise in the type of situation under which the incident occurs.

### **USFA**

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) and the National Fire Academy (NFA) are both very concerned with fire service health and safety issues. The USFA has requested to be notified immediately of any line-of-duty death and to be sent a copy of all investigation reports. The USFA also serves as a point of contact for the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.

The USFA contracts with a private sector investigative organization to prepare reports on incident of national interest and significance; this includes most incidents of multiple firefighter deaths and could include single fatalities in unusual circumstances. USFA does not have any investigative authority and the primary objective is to report and disseminate information that would be of interest to the fire service and other agencies, as well as supporting the USFA's health and safety projects. The report is for informational purposes only and is always submitted to the local jurisdiction for review and approval before it is released. In some cases USFA will request copies of the fire department's investigative reports or send a contractor to gather information from the local jurisdiction's investigation team.

If requested by the fire department, USFA has the ability to dispatch a contracted investigator to assist or advise the local jurisdiction in conducting the investigation, in some cases within hours of the occurrence. Most of the USFA contracted investigators are well qualified to assist the investigation team and are probably involved in more line-of-duty death investigations than any other



investigators. The request should be made directly to the USFA by calling 301-447-1000.

### **NFPA**

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has a continuing interest in firefighter health and safety, particularly as it relates to the development of NFPA standards. For many years NFPA has sent investigators to prepare reports on major incidents and often to assist local investigators. The NFPA investigation reports are primarily informational and often describe the relationship between NFPA standards and the incident. They are carefully limited to a factual discussion of the incident and are often published in NFPA periodicals and presented at NFPA meetings.

NFPA has no investigative or enforcement powers and participates in investigations only at the invitation or with the approval of the authority having jurisdiction. If requested by the local jurisdiction, NFPA is usually willing to send an investigator to assist the fire department investigation team. NFPA also has a staff of specialists in several different areas of fire protection who are available for consultation on unusual cases.

### **Other Investigators**

It is not unusual for a line-of-duty death to become the focus of multiple official and unofficial investigations in addition to those mentioned above. One of the characteristics of our current society is intense interest in establishing fault or blame for an incident. This may extend as far as accusations of criminally negligent acts and demands for criminal prosecution of individuals who are considered to be responsible for a line-of-duty death. While such charges are very rarely filed against fire department or against individual officers or members, the accusations have caused many difficult situations.

In some cases law enforcement agencies and prosecutors have launched their own investigations into incidents, adding unwanted pressure and complexity to an already tense situation. When these situations occur, the best policy for the fire department is to continue conducting its own investigation and to offer to share its findings with other investigators. Whether or not to invite the other agencies to participate along with the fire department's internal investigation team will depend on several factors, including jurisdiction and the relationship between the organizations. The accusers may attempt to discredit the internal investigation and use their legal authority to conduct their own investigation. At these times it is important to have good legal advice and a well established plan of conducting a thorough and honest internal investigation.



### **PSOB**

The Public Safety Officer's Benefits Act (Public Law 94-430) is intended to pay a sum in excess of \$151,635 (as of fiscal year 2000) to the survivors of any fire fighter who dies or is permanently disabled in the line of duty. A claim must be made to the Department of Justice, either by the survivors or by the involved fire department on their behalf. The responsibility rests with the claimants to submit a claim, so that determination of eligibility can be made. The PSOB staff should be contacted at 202-307-0635 or 1-888-744-6513 as soon as possible after a death occurs to ensure that the proper documentation is assembled and submitted.



## *Appendix A*

### **IAFC**

The International Association of Fire Chiefs does not have a specific role in the investigation of line-of-duty deaths, but is dedicated to assisting its members in any situation where the resources of IAFC could contribute to the investigation or to making the results of an investigation known to the fire service. It is with this purpose in mind that this guide was produced. When an investigation yields information that should be known to all fire service members to prevent future tragedies, the IAFC Health and Safety Committee will assist in that mission. In some situations IAFC has assisted fire departments in locating individuals with the needed expertise to assist in an investigation.

### **IAFF**

The International Association of Fire Fighters is extremely active in occupational health and safety and often becomes involved in investigations that involve the death or serious injury of career firefighters. This has included encouraging state and federal agencies to investigate incidents and engaging independent experts to investigate some situations.

The IAFF Health and Safety Office has resources that can be extremely helpful in situations involving the performance of protective clothing, breathing apparatus and other safety devices. These resources are usually accessible through the union local. A shared labor-management commitment to a health and safety program should support the fire department's investigation process, as well as providing access to IAFF assistance when it is needed.

However, it is difficult to predict the approach that IAFF will take to any particular incident. Where there is an effective ongoing safety program that involves labor and management, the IAFF will usually be supportive of a well managed internal investigation. Where there is labor-management conflict over health and safety issues, the investigation process may be used as an opportunity to escalate existing labor-management disputes.

### **NIOSH**

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is an agency of the federal Department of Health and Human Services that is primarily directed toward the development of research data to support the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). In this role NIOSH may request permission from the fire department to investigate incidents that involve topics of particular concern or interest, such as confined space incidents and heat stress deaths.



NIOSH is also the agency that tests and certifies respiratory protective equipment and is very interested in situations where breathing apparatus may be a factor in a fatality. Any time that breathing apparatus performance is suspected as a problem in a line-of-duty death, the fire department should contact NIOSH and request to have the apparatus examined.

NIOSH has no investigative authority or regulatory powers and is not intended to find fault or assign responsibility, other than gather information and finding facts to support research and future rulemaking. NIOSH has excellent resources and is usually extremely cooperative in assisting the local jurisdiction with an investigation, particularly if it fits the agenda of current research topics. It will identify lessons and examples and it may indicate actions that could or should have been taken to prevent the incident. In this manner it is very much a parallel to the fire department's internal investigation.

### **DOT**

The U.S. Department of Transportation is primarily interested in two types of incidents where line-of-duty deaths may occur. The investigation of vehicle accidents, particularly where there is a suggestion that vehicle design or maintenance defects may be responsible, is one area where DOT assistance may be extremely helpful. DOT is also very interested in hazardous materials transportation incidents. Department of Transportation assistance may be requested through the U.S. Fire Administration when a local jurisdiction feels that it would benefit from their assistance. In some cases the DOT investigators will arrive under their own investigative authority and ask to participate in an investigation. DOT has the authority to conduct an investigation, in cooperation with local authorities or independently; their cooperation will usually strengthen the resources of a fire department's investigation team.

### **NTSB**

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) is primarily involved in the investigation of accidents involving interstate public transportation carriers. The investigation of accidents involving fire apparatus with public carriers has caused NTSB to take an interest in fire apparatus vehicle design and maintenance, as well as driver training. NTSB is also involved in the investigation of most aircraft incidents. This agency may be contacted and requested to assist in the investigation of a major accident, although in most cases NTSB investigators will respond on their own to incidents that fall within the scope of their investigative authority.



## *Appendix B*

### **Product Liability**

The worker's compensation plans in most states provide the compensation program as an employee's only remedy for occupational injury or death. This means that the employee or the employee's survivors cannot sue the employer for liability, unless the right to compensation benefits is waived or gross negligence can be proven. In most cases this is an effective shield for the fire department against law suits, but it opens a Pandora's box when equipment failure is suspected of contributing to a serious injury or death. In several cases the survivors have sued the manufacturers of personal protective clothing and safety equipment, apparatus manufacturers, and other parties for damages, usually on the basis of faulty design or failure to meet standards.

This concern makes it extremely important to isolate and impound all such equipment and to maintain custody of it. The manufacturer should be invited to examine the items in the presence of a member of the investigation team, but the items should generally not be removed or released to anyone. The manufacturer's comments should be requested for the report. If the equipment is to be tested in a laboratory, an independent lab should be used and the chain-of-custody back to the fire department should be maintained.

### **Post traumatic incident stress**

Post traumatic incident stress has been recognized and documented as a significant factor in the fire service. A line-of-duty death is one of the most stressful situations that can occur. All members involved in the incident should go through a critical incident debriefing process and, if necessary, should receive additional support and treatment.

It is important not to overlook the investigation team in dealing with post traumatic stress. The pressures on the team members are as significant as those on the personnel who were involved in the incident and often must be prolonged for several days or weeks. In addition to their own stress, the team members are directly exposed to the feelings and reactions of everyone else who may have been affected by the incident.

It is generally inappropriate to have the investigation team members participate with the other personnel in group processes, since their presence may inhibit others from exposing their inner feelings. The investigators may be seen as an intrusion into the stress management process and may be subject to hostility from some of the participants. It is preferable to provide a separate stress management process for the investigation team, as a group, at regular intervals



in their work on the case. The critical incident team should assign a liaison to work with the investigation team and arrange for the investigators to receive full support for their stress, both during and after the investigation.

For more information on critical incident stress teams, contact the American Critical Incident Stress Foundation, P.O. Box 204, Ellicott City, MD 21401. The foundation's hotline is 410-313-2473.

### **Recordkeeping**

Detailed notes on all aspects of an investigation form the foundation for a thorough report. A *Witness Control Sheet* containing case number, date, time, name of person interviewed, locations, and remarks (or additional information as needed according to local preferences) should be maintained for all interviews.

### **Resource List**

United States Fire Administration  
Emmitsburg, MD 21727  
301-447-1272  
301-447-1000 (after hours)

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Hotline  
P.O. Box 204  
Ellicott City, MD 21401  
410-313-2473

For further information contact:  
International Association of Fire Chiefs  
4025 Fair Ridge Drive  
Fairfax, VA 22033-2868  
703-273-0911  
Fax 703-273-9363

# Appendix



# Chief-to-Chief Network Participant Profile

## Personal Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## Information About Your Department

If your experience with a line-of-duty death occurred while you were with another department, please complete both columns:

|   | <u>Current Department</u>  | <u>Previous Department</u>   |
|---|--|--|
| Circle the one that best represents the department/agency type.   | career   volunteer<br>combined   state   | career   volunteer<br>combined   state   |
| In what state/region is the department or agency located? Below is a list of the regions and the states in each region. |  |  |
| What is the population the department/agency serves?  | 0-9,999<br>10,000-49,999<br>50,000-99,999<br>100,000-199,999<br>200,000 and Up | 0-9,999<br>10,000-49,999<br>50,000-99,999<br>100,000-199,999<br>200,000 and Up |

### Region

Eastern  
Great Lakes  
Missouri Valley  
New England  
Southeastern  
Southwestern  
Western

### States

DC, DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA  
IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI  
CO, IA, KS, MO, NE, ND, SD, WY  
CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT  
AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV  
AR, LA, NM, OK, TX  
AK, AZ, CA, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA



# Financial Benefits Checklist

Consider each of the following benefits. Do families of your department members have access to them? If so, do you know how to access the benefits? Some of these are individual benefits. Does your department have personnel records that reflect these? If you are unsure about a certain benefit, jot down notes for yourself here, then follow up by getting further information when you return home.

| Source of Benefit | Is this available to your firefighters? |    |                | Notes/Action Needed |
|-------------------|---|----|----------------|---------------------|
|                   | Yes                                     | No | Need More Info |                     |

## Federal

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program   |  |  |  |  |
| Scholarships for surviving children/spouse |  |  |  |  |
| Social Security Death or Disability        |  |  |  |  |
| Victims Assistance Program                 |  |  |  |  |
| Veterans' Benefits                         |  |  |  |  |

## State Government

|                                 |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Burial Allowance                |  |  |  |  |
| Death Benefit                   |  |  |  |  |
| State Insurance                 |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Children |  |  |  |  |
| State Tax Benefits              |  |  |  |  |
| Victim's Assistance Program     |  |  |  |  |
| Workmen's Compensation Plan     |  |  |  |  |

**Local Government**

|                                 |  |  |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Department Insurance            |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Children |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Spouses  |  |  |  |  |
| Employee Assistance Program     |  |  |  |  |
| Pension Plan                    |  |  |  |  |
| Final Paycheck                  |  |  |  |  |

**Non-Profit**

|  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|
| Education Benefits for Children                  |  |  |  |  |
| Education Benefits for Spouses                   |  |  |  |  |
| Booster Club, 100 Club, Heroes, Blue Coats, etc. |  |  |  |  |

**Employee Data Sheet**

Name of Deceased: \_\_\_\_\_

SSN: \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Employment: \_\_\_\_\_

Assigned Company: \_\_\_\_\_ Shift: \_\_\_\_\_

Station Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Time of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of Death: \_\_\_\_\_

Brief Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

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Note: This information, except for home telephone number, should be made available for release to media, departmental members, and various outside agencies. Also, provide departmental photograph to media. Public Information Officer (PIO) should be contact point for outside agencies or fire departments.



# Fire/EMS Department Funeral Guidelines

Funeral Service for: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

|     | ITEM  | ASSIGNED TO | NOTES |
|-----|---|-------------|-------|
| 1.  | <b>Honor Guard Stand By</b><br>As needed dependant upon protocols and level of service. |             |       |
| 2.  | <b>Active Pallbearers</b><br>Six Personnel  |             |       |
| 3.  | <b>Honorary Pallbearers</b><br>Family, Company Officer, Retirees, etc                   |             |       |
| 4.  | <b>Funeral Detail</b><br>Uniformed Personnel  |             |       |
| 5.  | <b>Bugler</b>   |             |       |
| 6.  | <b>Flag for the Casket</b>  |             |       |
| 7.  | <b>Briefings</b><br>Departmental personnel role in the funeral                          |             |       |
| 8.  | <b>Survey areas</b>   |             |       |
|     | funeral service   |             |       |
|     | placement of attending personnel  |             |       |
|     | fire/EMS equipment  |             |       |
|     | provide information and maps  |             |       |
| 9.  | <b>Designate rooms</b>  |             |       |
|     | family and dignitaries  |             |       |
|     | honor guard preparation   |             |       |
| 10. | <b>Meeting area</b><br>away from funeral site for all uniformed personnel to assembly   |             |       |
| 11. | <b>Badge Covers</b>   |             |       |
| 12. | <b>Casket transportation – vehicle</b>  |             |       |
| 13. | <b>Maps for out-of-town</b>   |             |       |
|     | locations of fire stations  |             |       |
|     | Funeral home  |             |       |





# Employee Emergency Contact Information

The information that you provide will be used **ONLY** in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill it out fully and accurately because the data will help the department take care of your family and friends.

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

| Last Name    | First Name | Middle Name |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
|              |            |             |
| Home Address |            |             |
|              |            |             |
| City         | State      | Zip         |
|              |            |             |
| Phone Number |            |             |
| (     )      |            |             |

## CONTACT INFORMATION

Family or friends you would like the department to contact. Please list in the order to contact. Provide additional names on the back of this sheet.

**NOTE: If the contact is a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult to contact.**

| Name  |
|---|
|   |
| Relationship                                  |
|   |
| Home Contact Information                      |
| Address:                                      |
| Phone:  |
| Work Contact Information                      |
| Name of Employer:                             |
| Address:                                      |
| Phone:  |
| Pager/Cell phone:                             |
| Special Circumstances, i.e. health, age, etc. |
|   |

| List names and dates of birth of all of your children. |      |
|--|------|
| Name:  | DOB: |
| Name:  | DOB: |
| Name:  | DOB: |

| List the department member(s) you would like to accompany a chief fire officer to make the notification. |
|--|
| Name:  |
| Name:  |

| List anyone else you want to help make the notification. (for example, your minister) |
|---|
| Name:   |
| Relationship:   |
| Home Contact Information  |
| Address:  |
| Phone:  |
| Pager/Cell phone:   |
| Work Contact Information  |
| Name of Employer:   |
| Address:  |
| Phone:  |
| Pager/Cell phone:   |

## OPTIONAL INFORMATION

Make sure someone close to you knows this information.

| Religious Preferences |
|-----------------------|
| Religion:             |
| Place of Worship:     |
| Address:              |

|   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services?                       | yes | no |
| If you are entitled to a military funeral, do you wish to have one? | yes | no |
| Do you wish to have a fire service funeral?                         | yes | no |

|  |
|--|
|  |
| Please list your membership in fire service, religious, or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family: |

|  |
|--|
|  |
| Do you have a will? <span style="float: right;">yes    no</span> |
| <b>If yes, where is it located?</b>                              |

|  |                      |                           |                           |
|--|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
|  |                      |                           |                           |
| Please list any insurance policies you have:   |                      |                           |                           |
| <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"><tr><td style="text-align: center;"><u>Company</u></td><td style="text-align: center;"><u>Policy Number</u></td><td style="text-align: center;"><u>Location of Policy</u></td></tr></table> | <u>Company</u>       | <u>Policy Number</u>      | <u>Location of Policy</u> |
| <u>Company</u>   | <u>Policy Number</u> | <u>Location of Policy</u> |                           |

|                  |
|------------------|
| Special Requests |
|                  |

\_\_\_\_\_

Employee Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

# Line-of-Duty Death Response Guidelines

## Fact Sheet

| Vital Information   | Yes | No | Follow-up |
|---|-----|----|-----------|
| Number of firefighters killed                                       |     |    |           |
| 1.  |     |    |           |
| 2.  |     |    |           |
| 3.  |     |    |           |
| 4.  |     |    |           |
| 5.  |     |    |           |
| 6.  |     |    |           |
| Number of firefighters injured                                      |     |    |           |
| 1.  |     |    |           |
| 2.  |     |    |           |
| 3.  |     |    |           |
| 4.  |     |    |           |
| 5.  |     |    |           |
| 6.  |     |    |           |
| Survivors   |     |    |           |
| 1.  |     |    |           |
| 2.  |     |    |           |
| 3.  |     |    |           |
| 4.  |     |    |           |
| 5.  |     |    |           |
| Type of incident  |     |    |           |
| Is the fire out?  |     |    |           |
| Has the body been recovered?  |     |    |           |
| Has an autopsy been conducted?                                      |     |    |           |
| Does the coroner have a copy of the firefighter's autopsy protocol? |     |    |           |
| Did you explain the importance of an autopsy for the PSOB?          |     |    |           |
| Has a CISM program been requested?                                  |     |    |           |
| Has the chief contacted the family to determine their wishes?       |     |    |           |
| Are there any funeral details available?                            |     |    |           |
| Has an ICS been implemented to manage the funeral and the memorial? |     |    |           |
| Has family counseling been arranged?                                |     |    |           |
| Has legal counsel been contacted?                                   |     |    |           |
| Will there be adequate station coverage during mourning?            |     |    |           |
| Is an ICHIEFS delegation desired?                                   |     |    |           |

