

Law Enforcement Funeral Check List¹

The Chief/Departmental Head and/or his/her designated representative shall:

- Immediately assign a planning team, consisting of the chaplain(s) and/or departmental personnel, to the family of the deceased member.
- Send computer message regarding death and funeral arrangements to all departments/agencies in the country.
- Arrange for black or blue mourning bands and/or black arm bands and building bunting (if desired).
- Make arrangements to provide meals for the family from the time of death until the day of the funeral.
- Prepare fallen member's remembrance bulletin or card. Send it to the printers.
- Plan parking for visiting police and emergency vehicles on the day of the funeral.
- Plan route to the cemetery. This route could include a drive-by of the headquarters, the fallen member's home, and schools in the community.
- Arrange for a Casket Guard at the visitation and, if desired, a Color Guard for the funeral service.
- Obtain white gloves for use by Pallbearers, Casket Guard, and any others.
- Make a list of all agencies in attendance at the visitation and funeral service for later thank you notes.
- Obtain guest book(s) and uniformed personnel or others to be in charge of the book (Note: guest books are often provided by the funeral home).
- Arrange drivers for the family and make sure that there are enough vehicles for the family's use.
- Provide resource persons to meet the family's needs: meals, childcare, household chores, etc.
- Have a uniformed member available to stay at the house for security while the family is making funeral arrangements, as well as during the visitation, the wake, and the funeral.
- Arrange for any flowers – carnations. **[Note:** the use of flowers at Jewish



funerals is discouraged – check with the family’s Rabbi.]

- Arrange for pallbearers in consultation with the family.
- Arrange for ushers to assist the funeral director during the funeral service.
- Make motel/hotel arrangements for visiting police officers.
- Arrange for security for the visiting police and emergency vehicles, as well as the directing of the parking of these vehicles.
- Provide for a funeral meal or refreshments and servers.
- Provide for set up personnel for the funeral meal: tables, chairs, etc.
- Line up clean up personnel after the meal.
- Arrange for a bugler to play “Taps” at the conclusion of the graveside service.
- Arrange for bagpipe(s) or pipe and drum corps (if desired) (Note: one piper may be sufficient in most circumstances).
- Arrange for a firing detail to fire blank rifle, shotgun or pistol volleys at the conclusion of the graveside service. (usually a 21-gun salute, three sets of seven shooters)
- Have an Honor Guard in front of the fallen member’s home and headquarters from the time of death through funeral service and meal.
- Arrange for the police station/post, city/government flags to be flown at half-staff.
- Arrange for the national or state flag as a casket cover for presentation to the family (Make sure the pallbearers know how to fold the flag!).
- If the burial of the deceased member is to be out-of-state or the region, arrange for a suitable escort to the gravesite and contact a local law enforcement agency to arrange a graveside committal service.



Procession to the Cemetery¹

The motorcade route to the cemetery should be as direct as possible. The route could include the fallen officer's police facility, his/her home, the community's civic center and schools. The motorcade could be up to a mile or more in length.

The following is a suggested order of vehicles in the motorcade:

- The first police vehicles will be those from the department of the fallen officer.
- All other police and emergency vehicles not directly involved in the funeral service.
- The lead police vehicles for the member's department/agency (these may be motorcycles).
- The funeral director and the police chaplain and/or the religious officiant.
- The police vehicles for the pall bearers.
- The Hearse.
- A flower carrying vehicle, if used (this could be a fire truck).
- The member's family and friends' vehicles.

Note: It is advisable to have a tow truck available in case of vehicle breakdown.

Upon arrival at the cemetery, the police and emergency vehicles, all lights turned off, are parked and the uniformed law enforcement personnel are assembled (**Note:** Consideration should be given to allowing spouses of law enforcement personnel to stand by their spouses in this formation at the cemetery). When the hearse arrives at the cemetery, a pipe and drum corps can be added to lead the procession of the hearse to the gravesite. If a color guard is to be used, they would follow the pipe and drum corps. Next, if desired, a saddled, riderless horse with boots placed in the stirrups backwards, can also be added to lead the procession. The flower vehicle, if used, would be dropped off at this point and the flowers taken to the gravesite. The immediate family vehicle(s) would follow the hearse. Honorary pallbearers can be added to walk beside the hearse to the grave site. At the gravesite, the vehicle or vehicles are unloaded and parked. The pallbearers go to the hearse and carry the casket to the gravesite.



The Funeral Supply Kit¹

It is strongly suggested that a funeral supply kit be created and maintained/refilled by each department or agency. The following items should be considered in this kit:

- Black (or blue) badge mourning ribbons, enough for all department/agency members.
- A dozen pairs of white gloves in various sizes.
- Blank ammunition for the firing detail.
- List of needed functions and roles for the funeral:
 - Family Liaison Planning Team members and contact information.
 - Honor Guard members and contact information.
 - Color Guard members and contact information.
 - Pipe or Pipe and Drum Corps contact information.
 - Bugle player contact information or prerecorded tape.
 - Local state Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS) contact information.
(Their website: nationalcops.org)
- A copy of the Law Enforcement Manual



The Suicide of a Law Enforcement Officer¹

The suicide of a law enforcement officer can deeply affect the family, law enforcement personnel, AND the community. Questions may arise, “How does taking one’s own life endanger a person’s soul?” or, “Does the act of suicide dishonor the badge?” Persons may also feel a deep sense of guilt for not being able to prevent the departmental member from taking their own life. A suicide needs to be specifically addressed as a tragedy of circumstances that led their loved one, fellow departmental member and/or friend to feel that this was the only way out.

Remember, regardless of the cause of death, the deceased member was a “fellow officer” and that he or she will always be part of the “police family.” The department/agency chaplain should continue pastoral contact. Departmental/Agency members are encouraged to do the same.

Ongoing training will need to be instituted for law enforcement members, particularly for their supervisors, on the clues and symptoms and what to do about such clues if they are seen in their department’s personnel.

Departmental Animal Memorial Service¹

A Rationale

Most animals are not given a formal memorial service. An animal serving a law enforcement agency whether killed in the line-of-duty, died off-duty, or died of natural causes in retirement, deserves a memorial service for the dedication that animal and his/her trainer and/or handler(s) gave to the department/agency. The department/agency’s personnel and the community the animal served often need a memorial service to honor this animal because of their memories and remembrances of the animal – this is particularly true for school children who may have met the animal and formed an attachment.

¹ From: Sanders, W.P. (2006) *The Law Enforcement Funeral Manual: a Practical Guide for Law Enforcement Agencies When Faced with the Death of a Member of Their Department*, second edition, Charles C. Thomas Publisher, Springfield, IL



United States Flag Etiquette²

The below listed United States flag etiquette is from the American Legion and the United States Flag Code. Other countries have similar traditions and regulations. Since most law enforcement funerals are military in nature, check with that country's armed forces for a source of specific flag etiquette.

Draping the casket with a flag: The United States Flag Code states that although draping of the casket with an American flag is "usually reserved for veterans or highly regarded State and National figures, the Flag Code does not prohibit this use for an American citizen." Therefore, the American flag can be used to drape the casket of any United States fallen law enforcement member.

How to drape the casket: When the American flag is used to cover a casket, it should be so placed that the union (the blue field) is at the head and over the left shoulder of the deceased. The flag should not be lowered into the grave or allowed to touch the ground.

Folding the flag at the graveside: There is no United States Flag Code provision for folding of the flag. The triangular fold is traditional.

Flying the flag at half-staff: The American flag, when flown at half-staff, should be first hoisted to the peak for an instant and then lowered to the half-staff position. The flag should be again raised to the peak before it is lowered for the day. A state flag or any other flag or pennant in a display is lowered or removed when the Flag is at half-staff. No flag or pennant should be placed above the Flag of the United States

Displaying the flag: When displayed from a staff in a religious institution or public auditorium, the Flag of the United States should hold the position of superior prominence, in advance of the audience, and in the position of honor at the clergy or speakers right as they face the audience. Any other flag so displayed should be placed on the left of the clergy person or speaker or to the right of the audience.

Displaying a flag across a street or at an entrance to the cemetery: When the flag is displayed across and over the middle of a street, it should be suspended vertically with the union to the north, in an east and west street, or to the east, in a north and south street. Flags are often displayed over the middle of a street as a way of marking the funeral procession route to the cemetery or at the entrance to the cemetery.

²American Legion. National Americanism Commission (1996) *Let's be Right on Flag Etiquette*. Indianapolis, Indiana. Quoting from: *United States Flag Code* (Title 36, Chapter 10, paragraphs 170-178).

