

214. LINE-OF-DUTY SURVIVOR DEATH NOTIFICATION



RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY

Effective Date: 05/01/95
No. of Pages: 7
Serial Number: 10-114
Authority: Chief Jay Henthorne

NOTE: This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this Department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Policy is to direct the Richfield Police Department and its personnel to provide proper emotional care for the deceased officer's family. It should be remembered that the funeral arrangements are to be decided by the *FAMILY*, with their wishes taking precedence over the department's.

II. POLICY

It is the responsibility of the Richfield Police Department to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of any officer who dies in the line of duty, whether feloniously or accidentally, while an active member of the Department, to include the clarification and comprehensive study of survivor benefits, and to provide tangible and intangible emotional support during this traumatic period of re-adjustment for the surviving family.

III. DEFINITIONS

BENEFICIARY: Those designated by the officer as recipients of specific death benefits.

BENEFITS: financial payments made to the family to insure financial stability following the loss of a loved one.

LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH: Any action, felonious or accidental (automobile accidents, hit by passing vehicle during a traffic stop, training accidents, etc.), which claims the life of a police officer who was performing work-related functions.

SURVIVORS: Immediate family members of the deceased officer; spouse, children, parents, siblings, fiancée, and/or significant others.

IV. PROCEDURE

DEATH NOTIFICATION

The Police Chief will be notified immediately of any employee death. The Chief or designee will plan the death notification.

The name of the deceased officer **MUST NEVER** be released to the media before immediate survivors living in the area are notified.

If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate survivor, medical personnel should be dispatched to the residence to coincide with the death notification.

Notification **MUST ALWAYS** be made in person and never alone. A chaplain, psychologist, the head of the agency (or his/her representative), or another police survivor could appropriately accompany the informing officer.

If the above suggested persons are not readily accessible, notification should not be held up until these people can gather. If the opportunity to get the family to the hospital prior to the demise of the officer presents itself, don't wait for the appropriate delegation to gather.

As soon as most police families see officers at the door, they will know something is wrong. Ask to be admitted to the house. Never make a death notification on the doorstep. Gather everyone in the home and ask them to sit down. Inform them slowly and clearly of the information you have on the incident.

If the officer has already died, relay that information. Never give the family a false hope. If specifics of the incident are known, the officer should relay as much information as possible to the family.

If the family wants to go to the hospital, they should be transported via Department vehicle. If the family member insists on driving themselves, have an officer accompany them in the car.

The Department should know if there are young children in the home. The survivor may wish to leave the children at home. The Department should be prepared to handle immediate baby-sitting needs. This is where a co-workers' spouses or friends can be helpful.

Because of the nature of possible radio transmissions, the officer making the transport should notify the officer in charge at the hospital and dispatch that the family is en route.

If immediate survivors are from out of town, request personal death notification from the police agency in that area. Logistical arrangements should enable simultaneous telephone contact with the fallen officer's Department.

It is most reassuring to the family when the Chief or another high-ranking designee responds to the home or hospital. (In some cases, the absence may be viewed by both the family and fellow co-workers as not only insensitive but poor leadership as well.)

Keep in mind that the surviving parents should also be afforded this courtesy of personal notification if they live in the same geographic area.

ASSISTING THE FAMILY AT THE HOSPITAL

The ranking police official at the hospital should meet with designated hospital personnel to arrange appropriate waiting facilities for the family that are separate, but not isolated, from co-workers. This official should also ensure that medical personnel relay pertinent information to the family of the officer's condition on a timely basis. These same medical personnel should make the family aware of hospital policy about visitation with the injured officer and/or visitation with the body following the demise, and explain why an autopsy is needed.

If it is possible for the family to visit their loved one prior to the death, they most certainly should be afforded that opportunity. It is the family's right to visit their loved one. Agency officials should prepare the family for what they might see in the emergency room and accompany the family into the room for the visit if the family requests it. Do not be overly protective of the family. There is a definite need to touch and hold the body while there is still life, and being present when death occurs can be comforting to the family.

The same ranking police official or designee will see that the family is updated on the incident as soon as the family arrives at the hospital. A ranking police official or designee should be present the entire time the family is at the hospital and should arrange whatever assistance the family may need at that time. The people who made the initial notification should be among those at the hospital.

Idle promises should not be made to the family at this time. ("We'll promote him/her posthumously." "I guarantee we'll catch the person that did this.")

Arrangements should be made for transportation of the family back to their residence. Arrangements should be made for all medical bills relating to the services rendered to the deceased officer to be sent to the appropriate governmental agency for payment. The family should NOT receive any of these bills at their residence address.

SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY DURING THE WAKE AND FUNERAL

Appointment of a liaison officer is a critical assignment. Although the liaison officer should know the deceased officer and be aware of the family relationships, the officer should not be so emotionally involved with the loss that he/she would become ineffective. The liaison officer must know that THIS IS NOT A DECISION-MAKING POSITION. THIS IS A ROLE OF "FACILITATOR" BETWEEN THE FAMILY AND THE RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT. The liaison officer will:

- 1) Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department.
- 2) Meet with the family and tell them what his/her responsibilities will be during this time.
- 3) Meet with the family regarding funeral arrangements. Since most officers have not prearranged their wishes for the handling of their own funeral, the family will most likely need to decide all aspects of the funeral. The Department should only make the family aware of what they can offer in the way of assistance if the family decides to have a "line-of-duty funeral."
- 4) Know all information concerning the death and the continuing investigation to answer family questions.
- 5) Provide as much assistance as possible; oversee arrangements for travel and lodging for out-of-town family members.
- 6) Be constantly available to the family throughout this traumatic time.
- 7) See that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and will have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and funeral procession.
- 8) See that the family is briefed on the funeral procedure with L.E.M.A. (i.e., 21-gun salute, presenting of flag, playing of taps etc.);

A commanding officer should be designated to handle the media throughout this traumatic ordeal. In the unlikely event that the family should decide to accept an interview, this officer should attend and screen all questions presented to the family so as to not jeopardize upcoming legal proceedings.

The Department can make the family aware of alternate churches with seating capacities large enough to accommodate attendance at the funeral. However, any alternate churches will need to be aware of the fact that the family minister will officiate at the service. REMEMBER: The Department should only make the family aware of the alternatives. It's the family's choice.

Department vehicles should be made available to the family if they desire transportation to and from the funeral home.

PROVIDING INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE ON BENEFITS TO THE SURVIVING FAMILY

A 'benefits coordinator' should gather information on all benefits/funeral payments available to the family. Ensure that this benefits coordinator has the Department's full support to fulfill the responsibility to the survivor to coordinate ALL death benefits/payment. This officer should be completely responsible for filing appropriate paperwork and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received.

The benefits coordinator should visit with the surviving family to discuss the benefits within a few days following the funeral. A prepared printout of the benefits/funeral payments due the family, listing named beneficiaries, contacts at various benefits offices, and when they can expect to receive the benefit should be given to the family. This same explanation procedure should be repeated within a month following the death since the initial contact is clouded by the emotional numbness of the family during that first benefits meeting.

If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the child(ren) will be receiving.

The benefits coordinator should pay special attention to the problems with possible revocation of health benefits to the surviving family. The vast majority of survivors are given a 30 day grace period before being canceled from the coverage or before being responsible for monthly payments for the coverage.

SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY WHILE AWAITING TRIAL OF THE SUSPECT IN THE KILLING

If criminal violations surround the death, the family should be informed of all new developments prior to any press release.

The family should never hear of court or parole proceedings through the newspaper or television. The Department should keep the family informed of the legal proceedings. A contact person from within the Department should be assigned to notify the family of upcoming court proceedings.

Richfield Police Department's surviving families are no different than any other victims. They should know how the incident occurred, down to the smallest detail. Many Departments keep the family in the dark about the incident stating that it could influence the outcome of the trial if the family is informed of the investigation. If this is the case, a Department representative should sit down with the family and explain their reasons for not sharing information.

At the earliest opportunity following the trial, the investigators should sit down with the family and answer all their questions about the ordeal.

Encourage the family to attend the trial. The majority of survivors will attend so they can find out all the details of the incident that have thus far been denied them. Many survivors feel they are the only ones who can represent the deceased officer's interests. The Department should assign a 'support person' to accompany the survivors to the trial. If physical material evidence is going to be presented that will be upsetting to the family, this support person can suggest that the family leave the courtroom for that portion of the trial, or prepare the family for what they will be seeing.

If there will not be any court proceedings surrounding the circumstances of the officer's death, at the earliest opportunity, the Department should relay all details of the incident to the family.

CONTINUED FOLLOW-UP WITH THE FAMILY

The Department should be sensitive to the needs of survivors other than the spouse. Adult-aged or younger children, parents, siblings, etc., are all experiencing grief. Do not set time limitations on when the family should 'recover' from the death. Too often, police surviving families state they feel totally isolated by the Department within a short time following the funeral. Death of the officer does not take away that love for *police* that the entire family may feel. The following are some ideas to help survivors continue to feel a part of 'the family' for which their officer gave his life.

- 1) When plaques/memorabilia are given to the surviving spouse, consider making the same available to the surviving parents. Remember to invite the surviving family to agency activities. They need that continued contact.
- 2) Remember those children from a former marriage. Even though they may not have lived with the officer-parent, they are nonetheless still that officer's child. They too need personal memorabilia of their parent.
- 3) Do not make idle promises to the surviving family. It hurts children more to be promised a day with co-workers and be stood up rather than never to have been invited at all.

The Department should maintain support as long as the family feels the need for the support. In time, the family will let you know when they are ready to move on with their lives without assistance from the Department

By Order Of:



Chief of Police



CONFIDENTIAL

RICHFIELD POLICE DEPARTMENT LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH AND SERIOUS INJURY INFORMATION EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION FORM

This information will be used **ONLY** in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill out this information accurately because this data will be of extreme comfort to your family and the Richfield Police Department in fulfilling your wishes.

Full Name: _____

Your Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Your Home Phone Number: _____

FAMILY INFORMATION:

Spouse's Name: _____

Spouse's Address and Telephone number if different: _____

Include Cell #: _____

Spouse's Employer, Work Address and Telephone #: _____

Names and Dates of Birth of your Children:

_____ DOB: _____

_____ DOB: _____

_____ DOB: _____

_____ DOB: _____

_____ DOB: _____

If you are divorced, please provide information about your ex-spouse:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: Home: _____ Work: _____

Cell: _____

Do you want a police representative to contact your ex-spouse? () Yes () No

Please list the name, address, and telephone numbers of your children who live outside the family home along with key relatives (parents, siblings, in-laws, etc.) below:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone (H,W&Cell)</u>	<u>Relationship</u>

FAMILY LIASION

An officer from this agency, or another officer from another department, will be appointed to be your family liaison. Who would you wish that person to be?

NOTIFICATIONS

Please list the persons, not listed above, that you would like to be contacted by a police representative in case of serious injury or death in the line of duty. Begin with the first person you would like notified: (Indicate if you prefer a Richfield PD representative)

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone (H,W&Cell)</u>	<u>Relationship</u>

Is there anyone you would like to accompany the police representative when the notification is make to your immediate family? If someone other than a Richfield Police Officer, please include an address and telephone number:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone (H,W&Cell)</u>	<u>Relationship</u>

Is there anyone you would like contacted to assist your family, or to assist with funeral arrangements, or related matters who is not listed above? This person should be knowledgeable concerning your life insurance representatives, location of your will, etc.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Phone (H,W&Cell)</u>	<u>Relationship</u>

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Please list any preferences you may have regarding funeral arrangements:

Funeral Home: _____

Church: _____

Cemetery: _____

Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services? () Yes () No

If you are entitled to a military funeral as determined by the Department of Veteran Affairs, do you wish to have one? () Yes () No

Do you wish to have a Law Enforcement Funeral? () Yes () No

Please list any memberships that you have in law enforcement, religious, or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family:

Do you have a will? () Yes () No

If yes, where is it located? _____

Please list any insurance policies you may have:

<u>Company</u>	<u>Policy #</u>	<u>Location of Policy</u>
----------------	-----------------	---------------------------

_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

Are there any special requests or directions you would like followed upon your death?

Full honors funeral? _____

Do not include these tributes: _____

Do you prefer a church over a more larger setting like a high school?

Do you wish to be buried in uniform? _____

If not-what would you like to be buried in?

Cremation VS casket?

Who would like as honorary pallbearers? _____

Open casket?

Wake or Reviewal?

Any other requests? (Music, flowers, donations, etc.)

Signature: _____

Date: _____