

Policy: 1303.4, Departmental Deaths and Funeral Representation

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Distribution Group: All Employees

Review Responsibility: Honor Guard Commander

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Chief of Police: Eric D. Smith

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I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to prepare the Department for the event of an employee's death, either active or retired; to direct the Department in providing support for a deceased employee's family through contingency plans and procedures; and to establish procedures for Departmental representation at funerals.

II. POLICY

The Department has a responsibility to provide liaison and assistance to the family of an employee who dies. This responsibility includes providing tangible and intangible support for the family during the traumatic period of readjustment. A comprehensive study of the survivors' benefits with clarification should be provided for the family. Continued support for the family is essential.

III. DEFINITIONS

For this directive, an employee shall mean any person, sworn or civilian, whose job responsibilities are primarily directed toward the Police Department. Death may be classified as either natural or sudden. Natural death is from natural causes (i.e., age, prolonged debilitating illness, etc.).

Sudden death is defined as any death out of the ordinary, including but not limited to, automobile accidents, training accidents, illnesses such as heart attacks, etc., which claims the life of a Departmental employee.

The family includes the deceased employee's spouse, children, parents, siblings, fiancé, and/or significant other.

IV. PROCEDURES

1. NOTIFICATIONS

Regardless of who receives the initial notification of the death, the following procedures will be in effect. The person receiving the information will cause the chain of command of the deceased employee to be notified. The chain of command will be up to and including the Chief of Police. Retired employees' chain of command will be the Special Operations Division.

Officers and dispatchers should be aware that in the event of an on-duty death or injury, the external monitoring of the police frequency will be extensive, particularly by the news media. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. The name of the injured or deceased employee shall never be released to the media before the family of the employee is notified. If the media already has the employee's name, they should respond to a request to withhold this information pending family notification.

2. RESPONSIBILITIES

2.1 DIVISION COMMANDER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The incident commander shall see that the appropriate division commander is notified when a severe injury or Departmental death occurs. If an active employee is involved, the division commander is responsible for coordinating the arrival of the family, police officers, media, and others. The deceased employee's division commander will be responsible for the following duties:

- a. Respond to the hospital upon notification.
- b. Establish a Hospital Command Post to act as a single authoritative voice for all directions and information concerning the incident.
- c. Coordinate the arrival of immediate survivors, police officers, media, and others. The responsibilities include:
 1. Provide transportation of the survivors to the hospital, if possible.
 2. Arrange with hospital personnel for appropriate waiting facilities. If possible, segregated areas should be reserved for:
 - i. Family, Chief of Police, Notification Officer, and others requested by the family.
 - ii. A separate area for officers and friends.

- iii. A press staging area with the assistance of the Media Relations and Public Information Officer.
- 3. Notify the Honor Guard Commander to coordinate representation by Honor Guard members at the hospital.
- d. Appoint a Notification Officer.
- e. Appoint a Family Liaison Officer.
- f. Notify the Orlando Police Department Chaplain.
- g. Notify the Critical Incident Stress Management Team Commander.
- h. Notify the Media Relations and Public Information Officer.
- i. See that the appropriate referrals are made, within 24 hours, to the Employee Assistance Program or the Critical Incident Stress Management Team as required.

If the division commander is unavailable, the bureau commander from the affected bureau will appoint another manager to act in their place.

2.2 NOTIFICATION OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The Notification Officer is responsible for the notification of the deceased employee's family. The Notification Officer may be appointed by the division commander, volunteer for the assignment, or be predesignated by the injured/deceased employee. If neither the bureau commander nor the division commander is available, the designation of the Notification Officer shall fall to the senior ranking member. If distance or circumstances make an in-person notification by Orlando Police Department personnel impractical, the Notification Officer shall contact the appropriate law enforcement agency and request that they make an in-person notification. Timeliness takes precedence over protocol in the death notification process. The division commander is responsible for ensuring that immediate notification is made to the family. Upon confirmation of death, a death notification must be made shortly after, or coincidentally with normal command notifications.

Any notification of family should be made via personal contact. The Notification Officer is responsible for obtaining the family information. Logistical arrangements should include the telephone number for a ranking officer of this Department or the Notification Officer.

2.3 FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

2.3.1 INITIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

The Family Liaison Officer can either be appointed by the division commander or may volunteer for the position. In the event of a retired employee's death, where no one steps forward to assist, the Family Liaison Officer will be appointed by the Special Operations Division Commander. The responsibilities encompassed by the position include:

- a. Ensure medical personnel relay pertinent information about the employee's condition to the rest of the family first.
- b. Notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical billing shall be directed to the Family Liaison Officer on those occasions that apply.
- c. Arrange transportation for the family and others from the hospital back to their residence.
- d. Arrange visitation for the family of the critically injured employee before death if it is possible. Depending on hospital policy, they should be afforded the opportunity as soon as possible. Medical personnel should make

the family aware of the hospital policy about visiting a trauma patient or visiting with the remains. Medical personnel should explain why an autopsy is required.

- e. Contact the Communications Division and inform them all calls relating to the family be routed through the Family Liaison Officer.
- f. Expedite provision for all Department resources.
- g. Assist the family with arrangements for out-of-town visitors, survey of local churches and reception halls to check seating capacity, and media liaison via the Media Relations and Public Information Officer.
- h. Arrange routine residence checks for the next six to eight weeks following the tragedy. This service is necessary since large amounts of money will be passing through the residence.
- i. If no decisions were made, assist the family in making choices about the funeral. Make sure to coordinate all efforts with the Special Operations Division Commander if a Departmental funeral is requested.
- j. Relay all available information to the family concerning the circumstances of the death, if possible. Remember, there is a certain amount of sensitivity about releasing information concerning a homicide. The release of such information should be reviewed and approved by the Criminal Investigations Division Commander.
- k. Report regularly to the affected division commander on pertinent aspects of the death and its handling.
- l. Assist the family in obtaining information on survivors' benefits, filing for workmen's compensation claims, and filling out related paperwork.
- m. Notify the Memorial Committee Chairperson.
- n. Field all phone calls and inquiries regarding the establishment of any special trust or educational fund.

2.3.2 FOLLOW-UP RESPONSIBILITIES

Emotional support for the family is as important as financial. The Family Liaison Officer should be well-versed in dealing with witnesses and victims. Below is a list of suggested tasks for family support:

- a. Provide constant and continuing support for the family to keep them abreast of criminal proceedings.
- b. Accompany the family to any criminal or civil proceedings, introduce them to the prosecutor, and answer any questions that the family may have.
- c. Cooperate with outside peer groups, such as religious, professional, or social organizations the employee is a member of at the time of death.
- d. Ensure that the family does not feel isolated by the Department.
- e. Encourage others to make visits, or help with family needs, but to not make idle promises.
- f. Provide support personnel and services from the Fraternal Order of Police and the Fraternal Order of Police Associates.

Since the grief process has no set timetable, the Family Liaison Officer should gauge their withdrawal to the needs of the family. Ensure the family is still included in police functions. Try to keep in touch with the family at least once a month throughout the first year.

The Family Liaison Officer or the Chief of Staff should ensure the Chief of Police is notified about the upcoming anniversary date of the employee's death. Observe the date with some sort of personal contact and a note to the family or flowers to the grave site.

2.4 CEREMONIAL LOGISTICS

The Ceremonial Logistics shall be coordinated between the Special Operations Division Commander and the Honor Guard Commander. The Honor Guard Commander will direct the activities of the Honor Guard during ceremonies and memorials. The Special Operations Division Commander will direct the processional and escort logistics.

The Special Operations Division Commander and the Honor Guard Commander, or their designees, shall work with the Media Relations and Public Information Officer to coordinate logistics with capturing the ceremony for internal and external communications.

2.5 MEDIA RELATIONS AND PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICE RESPONSIBILITIES

The Media Relations and Public Information Office shall be responsible for the following:

- a. Obtaining an official department photo of the employee for internal and external communications.
- b. Work with the family liaison to obtain information about the employee to provide internally and externally (biography, work history, personal story).
- c. The Media Relations and Public Information Office will establish contact with Hospital Media Relations Staff on determining the press briefing location.
- d. The Media Relations and Public Information Office will establish contact with the Orange County Sheriff's Office Media Relations for air support in obtaining footage of the procession from the scene to the hospital; from the hospital to the medical examiner; from the medical examiner to the funeral home; from the funeral home to the funeral services.
- e. The Media Relations and Public Information Office shall coordinate department announcements with the Chief's Office to include:
 1. Statement from the Chief of Police
 2. Funeral Information
- f. The Media Relations and Public Information Office shall coordinate with the City of Orlando Communications and Neighborhood Relations Multimedia Team and the OPD Forensics Photographers on capturing all images and video including:
 1. Press Conferences
 2. Funeral Services
 3. Memorial Events
 4. Others deemed necessary by the Media Relations and Public Information Office
- g. Social Media Posts and any external messaging shall be coordinated with the Family Liaison officer to ensure appropriate approval
- h. The Media Relations and Public Information Office shall funnel all media requests of the family and coordinate any scheduling of interviews with the Family Liaison.
- i. The Media Relations and Public Information Office shall send one or more members to the State and National Memorial to obtain photos and videography for internal and external communications and serve as the on-the-ground media liaison for the Chief of Police and Family.

2.6 EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The Chief's Executive Assistant shall maintain a log of checks, condolence letters, and support information delivered to the Chief's Office.

- b. The Chief's Executive Assistant shall make copies of any checks and cash sent to the department for the family and have the Family Liaison sign off on pick up.
- c. The Chief's Executive Assistant shall send thank you letters to organizations, and others deemed necessary by the Chief of Police.
- d. The Chief's Executive Assistant shall maintain a list of dignitary invites for the Funeral Service.
- e. The Chief's Executive Assistant shall send any department special notices.

2.7 CHIEF OF STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

- a. The Chief of Staff shall work with the Family Liaison in facilitating survivor benefits from the city, state, and national government agencies that provide benefits to the fallen employee.
- b. The Chief of Staff shall work with the Honor Guard Commander, Memorial Committee Chairperson, Incident Commander, and the Media Relations and Public Information Office on memorial events procedures deemed necessary by the Chief of Police (i.e., DC memorial logistics, State Memorial logistics, etc.)

3. SURVIVOR BENEFITS FORMS COMPLETION

Employees may voluntarily complete a Survivor Benefits Form. This form may be obtained through the Police Career Counselor and may be changed or updated at any time the employee deems appropriate. Employees may specify on this form those persons the Department should notify in the event of their sudden death or serious injury. Employees may also provide other pertinent information for use by the Department or their families if they wish to do so.

All Survivor Benefits Forms (Emergency Notification, Personal Information/Documents, Service Details, Financial Information) completed by employees will be maintained by the Police Career Counselor and will be stored in a secure file in the Patrol Division Commander's Office. These forms will be available as needed to the responsible manager in the event of serious injury or death of an employee.

4. DEPARTMENTAL REPRESENTATION AT FUNERALS

The Orlando Police Department will provide formal or informal representation at the funerals of employees of the Orlando Police Department, other law enforcement employees within the state of Florida who were killed in the line of duty, employees of the Orlando Fire Department, and government officials or employees of other City departments as directed by the Chief of Police.

4.1 FORMAL REPRESENTATION AT FUNERALS

Formal representation at funerals shall consist of a full Honor Guard and motorcycle escort. Normally, all employees of the Orlando Police Department who wish to pay tribute to the deceased will be encouraged to attend the funeral services. Formal representation consists of the highest level of honors that the Department can provide.

Formal representation shall normally be offered for deceased employees of the Orlando Police Department, whether active or retired. The Chief of Police, or their designee, based in part on the wishes of the immediate family of the deceased and the availability of manpower, shall decide whether the Department's representation at the funeral shall be formal or informal.

Funerals for active or retired employees held outside the Central Florida area will be attended by the Honor Guard unless decided otherwise by the Chief of Police.

The Special Operations Division Commander and the Honor Guard Commander, or their designees, shall serve as the officers in charge of all formal representations. They shall be responsible for developing the operational plan for the funeral following established guidelines filed in the office of the Special Services Bureau Commander.

The officers in charge shall designate a police officer to provide communication between the family and the Department to ensure proper coordination and assistance as needed or requested.

The Honor Guard Commander, or their designee, will:

- a. Ensure the Honor Guard is present during the viewing hours.
- b. Be responsible for issuing a Special Notice outlining the details of the funeral, i.e., the type of uniform required, time, and location of the funeral, etc.
- c. Be responsible for statewide notification to all police agencies as to the circumstances of the death, date, time, and location of the funeral, if such notification is necessary.

All officers attending the funeral services are encouraged to be in a Class A uniform and will report to the officer in charge for assignment and instructions concerning the procession. Officers attending, but not in uniform, will not join the ranks of the uniformed officers, either inside or outside the church or funeral home.

4.2 INFORMAL REPRESENTATION

Informal representation shall consist of at least two, but no more than four members of the Honor Guard and/or the Special Operations Division personnel.

Informal representation shall be provided if the Department wishes to pay honor and respect to the deceased but at a lower level than formal representation. Informal representation will normally be provided for funerals of other law enforcement employees within the state of Florida who were killed in the line of duty, active or retired employees of the Orlando Fire Department, and government officials or employees of other City departments as determined by the Chief of Police.

The Special Operations Division Commander shall determine the number of people to represent the Department and shall ensure that they are assigned and properly briefed. One of the members shall be designated as the officer in charge.

Uniformed officers attending the funeral shall report to the officer in charge and comply with his/her requests concerning any arrangements or procession details.

Officers attending, but not in uniform, will not join the uniformed officer ranks outside or inside the funeral home or church unless otherwise specified by the officer in charge.

5. FLAGS AT POLICE HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER POLICE FACILITIES

The United States flag and the State flag shall be flown at half-mast for seven days for OPD employees killed in the line of duty. The United States flag and State flag shall be flown at half-mast on the day of service for an OPD active or retired member not killed in the line of duty.

The United States flag and the State flag may be flown at half-mast at other times as directed by the Chief of Police.

6. BADGES

A black band shall be worn over the badge for 30 days for the death of employees killed in the line of duty. A black band shall be worn over the badge until the date of the funeral, cremation, memorial service, etc., for other than line-of-duty deaths of active or retired employees. A black band may be worn over the badge at other times as directed by the Chief of Police.

V. FORMS AND APPENDICES

None

VI. REFERENCES

This policy rescinds Policy and Procedure 1303.3

Related Policies: Not Applicable

Related Laws: Not Applicable