



SUDDEN DEATH

General Order Number: 25.1

Effective Date: January 16, 2017

POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Brookline Police Department to make all appropriate notifications promptly and to conduct preliminary investigations in a thorough and professional manner when the police have knowledge that a person has died or is seriously injured or ill.

PROCEDURES:

I. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS OF SUDDEN DEATHS:

- A. PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION:** Preliminary investigating officer(s) at the scene of any death which is unattended by a physician shall document all facts relevant to appearance, condition, and position of the body, and all facts as to the cause and circumstances of death. The Officer shall contact the Patrol Supervisor from the scene and provide him or her with the information.
- B.** The Patrol Supervisor shall make notification to the Commanding Officer – Platoon on Duty. The Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty shall also notify the Detective Division, who will notify the State Police Unit assigned to the District Attorney's office.
- C.** In situations where the death is accidental, unnatural, violent, or suspicious, the Commanding Officer - Platoon on Duty shall also, in addition to the foregoing notifications, notify:
 - A.** IN CASES OF INDUSTRIAL FATALITIES - MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH – OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH;
 - B.** IN CASES OF MOTOR VEHICLE FATALITIES - THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE.
- D.** Upon responding to the scene of a death as outlined above, the Patrol Supervisor shall ensure that the body is not moved and the scene is not disturbed until the medical examiner or the representative of the District Attorney's office either arrives at the scene or gives directions as to what shall be done at the scene and for the removal of the body.
- E.** When the Patrol Supervisor is unable to contact the medical examiner, they shall notify the Chief Medical Examiner and seek telephone removal authority as

above. If neither the medical examiner nor the headquarters office can be contacted, the Officer in Charge - Platoon on Duty or the representative of the district attorney may authorize transfer of the body to the regional medical examiner's office or to a funeral home. Copies of all documents, including names and addresses of all known witnesses, will be sent to the medical examiner.

- A. In situations where the body is transferred to a funeral home, the funeral home director shall be notified of the possibility of an autopsy.
- F. In situations where the Medical Examiner is unable to respond, the assigned Patrol Supervisor shall, per Mass. Gen. Law, Chap. 38, Sec. 6:
 - 1. Ensure that all facts are documented relevant to appearance, condition, and position of the body, and every fact and circumstance tending to show the cause and circumstances of death;
 - 2. Seek telephone authority for removal of the body from the Medical Examiner or the Chief Medical Examiner;
 - 3. Notify next of kin, if known, or cause them to be notified, that this department is taking jurisdiction of the body and of the next location to which the deceased person will be taken.
- G. **SPECIAL REPORT:** A Special Report shall be made in all such cases.

II. **NOTIFICATION OF NORFOLK COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE:**
The Office of the District Attorney shall be notified by the Detective Division when a death occurs by any of the following circumstances:

- A. By violence;
- B. By the action of chemical, thermal, or electrical agents;
- C. Following abortion;
- D. From diseases, which result from occupational injury or infection;
- E. Suddenly when not disabled by recognizable disease;
- F. From malnutrition;
- G. From sexual abuse;
- H. A child who is determined to be physically dependent upon an addictive drug at birth;
- I. When any person is found dead.

Such notification shall include, but is not limited to, the known facts concerning the time, manner, circumstances, and cause of such death.

III. NOTIFICATION TO FAMILIES REGARDING DEATH, SERIOUS INJURIES OR EMERGENCIES:

- A.** During the course of duty, officers are required to make notifications of death, serious injuries, illnesses and emergency situations to family members. Officers making these notifications must be aware of the impact these notifications have on family members.
- B.** Officers may use the services of clergy, a relative or a close family friend. The help of these individuals may lessen the impact such news may have on the part of the recipient. Officers should convey these notifications in a prompt, compassionate and considerate manner, and be prepared to render appropriate assistance such as transporting family members to the hospital.
- C.** There will be times that other agencies will request the services of our department to make death/emergency notifications. All such notifications/requests made by other agencies will be acted upon promptly and in a professional manner. Notifications should be made in person and not over the telephone whenever possible. If the victim is still alive and in the hospital, the family should be told the extent of the injuries or emergency situation. The family should be taken to any local hospital upon request. If the hospital is not local, officers should be prepared to provide necessary assistance and information.