



Colorado Springs Police Department

General Order

1030 Death Notifications

Section 1000 –Patrol Functions

Effective Date: 4/20/2023
Supersedes Date: 6/23/2021

.01 Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to furnish guidelines when making death notifications.

.02 Cross Reference

[GO 708 Family Notification: Officer Death or Trauma](#)

[DL-210-03 Chaplaincy Corps](#)

[VAU-01 Victim Advocacy Program](#)

.03 Discussion

One of the most traumatic assignments that a department member can be asked to perform is that of making a death notification. Colorado Springs Police Department (CSPD) members must be tactful and sensitive in their approach to this assignment, recognizing the emotional shock to the person receiving the notification.

.04 Policy

The Coroner's Office is the primary entity responsible for death notifications. CSPD personnel will make death notifications when necessary for an investigation, when requested by an outside agency, or when requested by the Coroner's Office.

CSPD will make every effort to provide on-call Police Chaplains and CSPD Victim Advocates when making a death notification, when available/appropriate. If a chaplain is not available, department members must be tactful and sensitive to the nature of the situation.

The CSPD Victim Advocacy Unit (VAU) can be utilized to accompany officers in delivering a death notification of a victim and provide family members of the victim with information on available resources and support.

.05 Definitions

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.10 Chaplain and Victim Advocacy Unit (VAU) Utilization

The on-call chaplain should be utilized whenever a death notice needs to be delivered. The department member requesting the chaplain will meet the chaplain at a site designated by the chaplain or provide transportation at the request of the chaplain. The department member will assist and follow the guidance of the chaplain.

CSPD VAU is also available to accompany law enforcement personnel in delivering death notifications regarding a victim. When requesting the accompaniment of an advocate, officers can contact the on-call victim advocate and instruct the advocate on the location of where to meet the officer. The victim advocate will assist and follow the guidance of the officer and provide the family of the victim with information on resources and services, which meet their needs.

.20 Notification by Department Member

The following guidelines are given for situations in which a chaplain is not available, and the department member has to deliver the death notice.

The Communications Center will notify a field supervisor whenever a death notification is required. The Communications Center can also contact an on-call CSPD victim advocate to accompany law enforcement personnel to provide the death notification.

Whenever possible, death notification will be made in person; being cognizant of:

- Being sympathetic and empathic, realizing the traumatic impact that the notice will have on the recipient
- Whenever possible, set up a support system utilizing a chaplain, a victim advocate, a neighbor, a relative, or a friend
- When making a death notice, use a statement similar to this: "I am (name and rank). I have some bad news for you. Can we sit down? There has been a bad accident, etc., and (name) has been killed (or has died)."
- After making the notification, remain at the scene to answer any questions to the best of your ability.

If no support system was obtained before delivering the notice, ask if there is anyone that you can call.

.30 Grief Reaction

Often, a person being notified of a death will become angry with the person delivering the notice. This is a grief reaction and should not be taken personally. Explain that you understand their anger and sympathize with them. Again, use tact and be sensitive to the nature of the notice.

.40 Telephone Notification

Only as a last resort will a death notification be made by telephone. As previously stated, use tact and be sensitive to the nature of the notice.

If possible, ask the person if they have a support person with them and to please sit down in a safe place. Also, ask them if they are driving a vehicle. If so, ask them to either call you back or stop the vehicle in a safe place before the death notification is given.

Stay on the telephone long enough for the information to take hold. If requested to make an additional call, such as, for support (e.g., Chaplain, counselor, family member, or friend, etc.), do so.

When a member must deliver a death notice to someone out of our jurisdiction, consider requesting that a peace officer where the recipient resides, make personal contact to deliver the message.