



# Policy and Procedure

Policy Number

3.10

Chapter Employment Policies

Article Employee Death or Serious Injury

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## PURPOSE

To establish guidelines to follow in the event of the death or serious injury of an employee and to direct the provision of support for the employee’s family.

## POLICY

To promptly notify and provide assistance to the immediate survivors of an employee who dies or is seriously injured in the line of duty and to provide them with tangible and intangible emotional support during this traumatic period.

## DEFINITIONS

**Line-of-Duty Death** is the death of an active duty officer by criminal or accidental means during the course of performing police functions while on or off-duty. This also includes department civilian employees and volunteers who die while on duty performing authorized duties.

**Next of Kin** is the closest relative of the deceased employee – for example, spouse, parents, siblings, or children.

**Survivors** are the immediate family members of the deceased employee to include spouse, children, parents, siblings, fiancée or significant others.

**Serious Injury** is any injury requiring admission into a medical facility. Injuries not included are those requiring treatment and release from a medical facility.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES

### Coordination <CALEA 22.2.4>

Coordination of events following the line-of-duty death of an employee is an extremely important and complex responsibility. Professionalism and compassion must be exhibited at all times as an obligation to the employee’s survivors and to the law enforcement community. The below guidelines should be followed with the understanding that the wishes of the family take precedence over the desires of the department.

Death or serious injury of a non-sworn employee or volunteer while on-duty may be as traumatic to those involved as a line-of-duty death; therefore, it is recommended the Department utilize applicable portions of this policy to ensure proper notification and assistance to the employee/volunteer’s family, co-workers and survivors.

In order to provide the best possible services and support for the employee’s family, specific tasks may be assigned by the Chief or designee to selected members of the Department. Their titles are:

- Notification Officer
- Hospital Liaison Officer





- Family Liaison Officer
- Department Liaison Officer
- Funeral Liaison Officer
- Benefits Coordinator
- Public Information Officer

### Notification

It shall be the responsibility of an on-duty patrol supervisor to properly coordinate the notification of the next of kin of an employee who has suffered severe injuries or died. In the event of an employee's death or serious injury, all efforts to follow the guidance provided by the employee in the Emergency Notification form sealed and filed in Communications will be pursued first. In the alternative, or lacking a completed Emergency Notification form, the on-duty patrol supervisor may personally make the notification or designate a Notification Officer to inform survivors.

The name of the deceased or severely injured employee must never be released by the department before the immediate family has been notified.

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

Notification must always be made in person and never alone. The Chief of Police or a representative, police chaplain, peer support team member, or another police survivor should accompany the Notification Officer. If the aforementioned persons are not readily available, notification should not be delayed until these people can gather. If there is an opportunity to get to the hospital before the demise of the officer, don't wait. The family should learn of the death from the department first and not the news media or other sources.

Never make a death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted to the home. Inform all family members slowly and clearly of the information that you have. Use easy-to-understand language to briefly explain the circumstances of the incident and the fact that the individual has died. If specifics of the incident are known, the Notification Officer should relay as much information as possible to the family. Be sure to use the employees name during the notification.

If the family requests to visit the hospital, they should be transported by police vehicle. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves to the hospital. If the family insists, then the officer should accompany them in their vehicle.

If there are young children at the home, the Notification Officer must arrange for babysitting needs. This could include co-workers, spouses, members of the FOP, peer support team member, or other support organizations assisting with transporting the children to the home of a relative.

Prior to departing for the hospital, the Notification Officer should notify hospital staff and the Hospital Liaison that the family members are enroute.





If the deceased or severely injured employee's family live in the immediate area, the same courtesy should be afforded to them, if notification is possible.

If immediate survivors live beyond the Loveland area and outside of a timely response, the Notification Officer will coordinate the death notification with the law enforcement agency that serves the area. Arrangements should be made with the notifying agency that would allow the survivors to speak on the phone with a Loveland Police Department representative to answer questions and provide further information.

The Chief or an appointed designee should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with the family as quickly as possible.

In the event of an on duty death, the external monitoring of police frequencies may be extensive. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. If the media has somehow obtained the employees' name, they should be advised to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin.

### **Hospital Liaison**

The Hospital Liaison Officer is responsible for coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the member's family, the press, and others at the hospital.

Responsibilities of the Hospital Liaison include:

- Coordinate the arrival and arrange for reserved areas for the family, officials, media and others
- Ensure the family waiting room contains a telephone capable of making outside calls
- Act as liaison with the hospital staff to include security personnel
- Meet the Notification Officer and the family members upon their arrival at the hospital
- Ensure the family receives prompt medical information
- Ensure family needs are met while at the hospital
- Assist hospital staff with maintaining the hospital's efficiency when numerous police officers arrive to grieve or show support for the family

If it is possible for the family to visit the injured member before death, they should be afforded the opportunity. A hospital representative, with the assistance of a police official, will prepare the family for what they might see in the emergency room and should accompany the family into the room for the visit if the family requests it. Medical personnel will advise the family of visitation policies and explain the donation process. In the event of death, a police official will explain the necessity of autopsy.

### **Family Liaison**

The selection of a Family Liaison Officer is a critical assignment. An attempt should be made to assign someone who enjoyed a close relationship with the member and his/her family. This is not a decision-making position, but a facilitator between the family and the Department.

Responsibilities of the Family Liaison Officer include:





- Ensuring that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department
- Assisting the family with funeral arrangements and making them aware of what the Department can offer if they decide to have a police funeral. The Funeral Liaison Officer will assist in the process. If they choose the latter, briefing the family on funeral procedure (i.e., presenting the flag, playing of taps, honor guard)
- Apprising the family of information concerning the death and continuing investigation, after receiving the accurate information from the Investigations Unit
- Providing as much assistance as possible, including overseeing travel and lodging arrangements for out-of-town family travel, food for funeral attendees following the burial, etc
- Notifying Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) at (573) 346-4911. Members are available to provide emotional support and benefit information to surviving families [www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org)
- Carrying cell phone at all times to ensure an open line of communications is maintained
- Informing the family as to what to expect in relationship to media coverage
- Family Liaison Officer(s) should request the assistance of the Department Liaison Officer with any of these duties

### Department Liaison

The Department Liaison Officer will be a command staff officer because of the need to effectively coordinate resources throughout the Department.

Responsibilities of the Department Liaison Officer include:

- Assigning the Family and Funeral Liaison positions, with the approval of the Chief of Police or designee
- Conducting a daily briefing for the Chief of Police and senior command staff. The Public Information Officer, the Benefits Coordinator, the Hospital Liaison Officer and Funeral Liaison Officer should attend and report updates at these briefings
- Working closely with the Family Liaison Officer to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled
- Issuing a Teletype message to outside agencies, describing:
  - Name of deceased
  - Date and time of death
  - Circumstances surrounding the death
  - Funeral arrangements (state if service will be private or a police funeral)
  - Uniform to be worn
  - Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers
  - Contact person and phone number for visiting departments to call to indicate their desire to attend or to obtain further information
- Issuing printed messages from the Chief of Police, notifying members of timely information, i.e., policy regarding the wearing of memorial sashes on badges and vehicles, funeral service details
- Establishing a command center and telephone line to coordinate information and response to the tragedy. This telephone number will be given to the community, as well as department members
- Coordinating the activities of all the specialty officers involved in the event
- Arranging for routine residence checks of the survivor's home by the Patrol Division for 6-8 weeks following the funeral. This service is necessary since large amounts of money are passing through the residence and the survivors will be spending time away from home with legal matters





- Writing correspondence for the Chief of Police to recognize all that assisted with the event

### **Funeral Liaison**

The Funeral Liaison Officer acts as a facilitator between the decedent employee's family and the department during the wake and funeral. The Funeral Liaison should be a Sgt or above and familiar with honors the agency can provide. Funeral arrangements of the deceased member are to be discussed with the family, with their wishes taking precedence over the Department's.

Responsibilities of the Funeral Liaison Officer include:

- Meeting with family members and explaining his or her responsibilities to them
- Being available to the family prior to and throughout the wake and funeral
- Assisting the family in working with the funeral director regarding funeral arrangements
- Determining the need for travel arrangements for out-of-town family members and any other special needs of the family during the funeral and reporting this information to the department liaison
- Briefing the family members on the procedures involved in the law enforcement funeral
- Coordinating with the appropriate personnel to provide law enforcement specific funeral services (e.g., honor watch, honor guard) as dictated by the family

### **Benefits Coordinator**

The Benefits Coordinator will gather information on benefits/funeral payments available to the family. The Benefits Coordinator has the Department's full support to fulfill this responsibility to the survivors and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received.

Responsibilities of the Benefits Coordinator include:

- Assisting with the filing of workers' compensation claims and related paperwork
- Presenting information on all benefits available to the family
- Documenting inquiries and interest in public donations to the family and establishing a mechanism for receipt of such contributions, as appropriate
- Preparing all documentation of benefits and payments due to survivors to include the nature and amount of benefits to be received by each beneficiary, the schedule of payments, and the name of a contact person or facilitator at each benefit or payment office
- Filing all benefits paperwork and maintaining contact with the family in order to ensure that benefits are being received (a copy of benefits documentation should be provided and explained to all survivors affected)
- Advising the surviving family of the role of police associations and organizations and the nature of support programs that they sponsor for law enforcement survivors
- Contacting Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) at (573) 346-4911 [www.nationalcops.org](http://www.nationalcops.org) and Public Safety Officers Benefits (PSOB) program at [www.psob.gov/](http://www.psob.gov/) for benefit information

### **Public Information**





The Public Information Officer (PIO) will coordinate with the news media throughout the ordeal. If the family decides to accept an interview, a member should attempt to screen questions presented to the family so as not to jeopardize subsequent legal proceedings.

Responsibilities of the Public Information Officer include:

- Contacting the hospital PIO to coordinate the initial press releases
- Locate and set up press area outside the hospital
- Communicate (joint) press releases from the hospital
- Follow-up with department press releases per the PIO job description
- Arranging for appropriate media coverage of the funeral, as decided by the family. The PIO shall coordinate with the Family Liaison on the family decisions regarding this aspect

### **Support for Coworkers**

The death or serious injury of a coworker in the line of duty can be one of the most traumatic events anyone can experience. Following a line-of-duty death or serious injury, all employees shall be provided the opportunity to participate in psychological or peer support services through the department's employee assistance program, peer support program, department psychologist, or City of Loveland Human Resources Department.

### **Casualty Assistance Guide**

For further information and guidance refer to the Loveland Police Department Casualty Assistance Guide.

The guide contains information on:

- Deaths of retired officers, service animals and other LE agency employees
- Funeral protocol and honors
- Non-Line-of-Duty death
- Benefits and assistance summary

