



Wilmington Police Department

Directive: .05.15

Line of Duty Deaths and Serious Injuries

CALEA Standards: 22.1.5



I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to prepare the Department in the event of an Officer's death or serious injury in the line-of-duty. The Department will provide proper assistance to the Officer and/or their family.

II. Definitions

Benefits Coordinator: A Command Officer who assures the family and follows up on all benefits due to the family.

Command Officer in Charge: A Command Officer in charge of the scene.

Departmental Liaison Officer: A Division Commander appointed to work with the family during and after the funeral.

Family Support Advocate: The Family Support Advocate should be a Command Officer working with the Police Chaplain, acting together, as a long-term support mechanism.

Funeral Liaison Officer: A facilitator who, working with the Police Chaplain, assists the surviving family and the Department during the funeral.

Hospital Liaison Officer: The first Command Officer to arrive at the hospital.

Notification Officer(s): The Department Police Chaplain as designated by the Chief of Police and/or a Command Staff member.

Police Chaplain: Appointed clergy responsible for ecclesiastical needs.

III. Procedure

A. Death Notification

This procedure is followed in the event of a critically injured Officer with poor prognosis or an immediate line-of-duty death.

1. As soon as possible, a Sworn Officer will be assigned to accompany the injured or deceased Officer until relief is assigned or the detail is terminated.
2. The Command Officer in Charge at the scene (usually the Watch Commander) is responsible for ensuring that a timely notification is made to the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, or designee. They should coordinate with the Hospital Liaison Officer to prepare for the arrival of officials, family or media.
3. The Chief of Police or designee will, upon notification, appoint a

Police Chaplain as Notification Officer.

4. Notification will be made in person. The Police Chaplain will be accompanied by the Chief of Police, Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief of Police, or designee.
5. If there exists an opportunity to get the family to the hospital, prior to the death of the injured Officer, the family will be taken immediately to the hospital without any delay.
6. The Notification Officer should be reminded of the following;
 - a. The family will know something is wrong when they see you.
 - b. Insist on entering the house. Do not deliver on the doorstep.
 - c. Gather everyone in the house, seat them, and inform them slowly and clearly, first,
 - i. About the information you have on the incident
 - ii. Use the Officer's name during the notification
 - iii. Specifically use words such as "dead, died, deceased."
 - d. If the family prefers to go to the hospital, they may be transported via police vehicle. The transporting officer should advise his assignment to dispatchers and tune his radio to an alternate channel. If the family prefers to drive their own vehicle, an Officer(s) should accompany them.
7. Great care must be taken to restrict the family from hearing radio communications regarding the incident. The name of the deceased Officer **MUST NOT** be released, broadcast, or discussed over radios.
8. The Notification Officer is to advise the Hospital Liaison Officer when/if the family is in route.
9. Any notification of immediate survivors beyond the immediate Wilmington area should be made by the local law enforcement agency in that area, unless the family desires to do it themselves. The Notification Officer will obtain the names of the relatives, with information provided by the department or Chaplain Personnel Information Records. Agencies may be telephone or pinned when requesting a personal death notification.
10. The Notification Officer will provide to the Chief of Police a report with names, dates, and times of all notifications made.

B. Assisting the Family at the Hospital

- 1.** Until relieved, the first supervisory Officer to arrive at the hospital becomes the Hospital Liaison Officer. The Hospital Liaison Officer is responsible for notifying the Police Chaplain and coordinating the arrival of survivors, officials, media, and others. These responsibilities include:
 - a.** Collaborate with the hospital authorities and Special Police for segregated waiting and staging areas. There should be segregated areas for:
 - i.** Immediate family, the Chief of Police, the Notification Officer, and others specifically requested by the family.
 - ii.** Fellow police officers, EMS, fire, or dispatchers
 - iii.** All forms of the media
 - b.** Ensuring that the medical personnel relate pertinent information on the Officer's condition, first, to the family.
 - c.** Notifying the appropriate hospital personnel that all billing for medical services be directed to the City of Wilmington.
 - d.** Arrange transportation for the immediate survivors and others from the hospital back to their residences.

C. The Funeral

- 1.** Within 24 hours of a line-of-duty death, the Chief of Police or designee appoints a Funeral Liaison Officer, a Benefits Coordinator, a Family Support Advocate, and a Department Liaison Officer. These appointments are to be issued as a Special Order. Upon appointment, all referrals shall be made to/through the appropriate personnel.
- 2.** The Chief of Police shall personally notify the family of his appointments.
- 3.** Extra personnel, including overtime, may be necessary in fielding the influx of phone calls. Phone calls of specific nature should be directed to the appropriate appointed liaison.
- 4.** Within 48-72 hours, the Chief of Police should make appropriate referrals under the Employee Assistance Program for Critical Incident Debriefing for Officers (if necessary, EMS, fire, and dispatchers), close to the incident and referrals for surviving family, if they wish.

D. The Department Liaison Officer

- 1.** The Department Liaison Officer will work closely with the Funeral Liaison Officer to meet the needs and requests of the family regarding funeral arrangements.
- 2.** The Department Liaison Officer will direct the funeral activities of the Department and visiting police departments, **according to the wishes of the family**. The Department Liaison Officer is also responsible for:
 - a.** Overnight arrangements for travel and lodging for out-of-town family members.
 - b.** Expedient provision of all department resources.
 - c.** A comprehensive survey of appropriate facilities that could accommodate a law enforcement funeral. It is not out of the ordinary to have several thousand present. This facility information should be given to the family as soon as possible for decisions.
 - d.** Coordinating notification to all official law enforcement agencies.
 - e.** To coordinate honor guards, pallbearers, traffic control, and liaison with visiting law enforcement agencies.
 - f.** To arrange thorough and regular residence checks of the survivors home(s) during the funeral and for 6-8 weeks following.

E. Funeral Liaison Officer

- 1.** The Funeral Liaison Officer is responsible for:
 - a.** Meeting with the family and explaining his responsibilities and remain constantly available to them.
 - b.** Extending the department's helping hand in the funeral planning, to whatever extent the family prefers.
 - c.** Meeting with the family and funeral director regarding the funeral arrangements
 - d.** Relaying all relevant and available information to the surviving family concerning circumstances of death and any continuing investigation. If the death resulted from criminal activity, the Funeral Liaison Officer should be sure that investigators and prosecutors deliver as much information possible to the family, especially during the first few days. The Funeral Liaison Officer may be that Officer closest to the deceased or family.

F. Benefits Coordinator

1. In conjunction with the city's Human Resources Department, the Chief of Police will designate a supervisor or command Officer to act as Benefits Coordinator. The Benefits Coordinator is responsible for:
 - a. Filing worker's compensation claims and related paperwork.
 - b. Gathering information on all benefits/funeral payments available to the family.

These may include:

- i. Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act provided by the Department of Justice.
 - ii. Insurance and line-of-duty death benefits provided by the City of Wilmington - Human Resource Management or Risk Management.
 - iii. State of North Carolina Public Safety Benefits Act.
- c. Fielding phone calls and inquiries regarding the establishment of any special trust or educational trusts.
- d. Preparing a printout or other documentation of the benefits/ funeral payments due the family, listing named beneficiaries, contacts at various benefit offices, and when they can expect to receive the benefits.
- e. Filling out all benefit related paperwork and following through with the family to ensure benefit receipt.
- f. Visiting with the surviving family within a few days following the funeral to discuss benefits. The prepared printout and other documentation should be made available to the family at that time.
- g. If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the children will be receiving.

G. Family Support Advocate

1. The Family Support Advocate is responsible for;
 - a. Being in constant contact with the surviving family to keep them fully informed on any criminal proceedings.
 - b. Accompanying the surviving family to any criminal proceedings.
 - c. Coordinating outside peer support groups.

Compensation policy will be followed.

K. Additional Support

- 1.** The Police Department's Peer Support Program will be activated to supplying support for the injured employee and their immediate family members.