
	LEXINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE GENERAL ORDER	Distribution	General Order Number
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Order Title: LINE OF DUTY DEATHS		CALEA Accreditation Standard:	Section
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Section Title PERSONNEL		 Angela M. Greene, Chief of Police	

This General Order is for departmental use only and does not apply in any criminal or civil proceeding. This General Order should not be construed as creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims. Violations of this General Order will only form the basis for departmental administrative sanctions. Violations of law will form the basis for civil and criminal sanctions in a recognized judicial setting.

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish Lexington Police Department procedures that will ensure the proper support and emotional care for an officer’s family following a line of duty death.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Lexington Police Department to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of any officer who dies in the line of duty. This assistance will be provided whether the death was felonious or accidental while the officer was performing a police-related function, either on or off duty, and while the officer was an active member of the Department. The Chief of Police may institute certain parts of this order for cases of an officer’s natural death. The Department will also provide a clarification and comprehensive study of survivor benefits as well as other tangible and intangible emotional support during this traumatic period of readjustment for the surviving family. Funeral arrangements of the deceased officer are to be decided by the family, with their wishes taking precedence over the Department’s.

III. DISCUSSION

Coordination of events following the line-of-duty death of a police officer is an extremely important and complex responsibility. Professionalism and compassion must be exhibited at all times as an obligation to the officer’s survivors and to the law enforcement community. In order to provide the best possible services and support for the officer’s family, specific tasks may be assigned to selected members of the Department. Their titles are:

- Notification Officer
- Hospital Liaison Officer
- Family Liaison Officer
- Department Liaison Officer
- Benefits Coordinator

An explanation of each of these responsibilities is contained in this General Order. An officer may be called upon to perform more than one role.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Notification

1. It shall be the responsibility of the Chief of Police to properly notify the next of kin of an officer who has suffered severe injuries or died. Chief of Police shall personally make the notification and act as the NOTIFICATION OFFICER.
2. The Department **MUST NEVER** release the name of the deceased officer before the immediate family is notified.
3. 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.
4. Notification **MUST ALWAYS** be made in person and never alone. The Chief of Police or a representative, police chaplain, close friend, or another police survivor could appropriately accompany the NOTIFICATION OFFICER. However, if the aforementioned persons are not readily accessible, notification should not be delayed until these people can gather. If there is an opportunity to get to the hospital prior to the death of the officer, the Notification Officer shall **NOT** wait for the delegation to gather. The family should learn of the death from the Department **FIRST** and not from the press or other sources.
5. Officers shall **NEVER** make a death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted to the house. Officer should inform family members slowly and clearly of the information that you have. If specifics of the incident are known, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER should relay as much information as possible to the family. Officers should be sure to use the officer's name during the notification.

If the officer has died, relay that information. Never give the family a false sense of hope. Use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away."

6. 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 on driving, an officer should accompany them in the family car.

7. If young children are at home, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER should help arrange for babysitting needs. This may involve co-workers, spouses, transportation of children to a relative's home, or a similar arrangement.
8. Prior to departing for the hospital, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER should notify the hospital staff and the HOSPITAL LIAISON (by telephone if possible) that a member(s) of the family is en route.
9. The deceased or severely injured officer's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification if possible.
10. If immediate survivors live outside the Lexington area, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER will ensure that the Rockbridge Regional Communications Center sends a teletype message to the appropriate jurisdiction requesting a PERSONAL notification. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER shall call the other jurisdiction by telephone in addition to the teletype message. Arrangements should be made to permit telephone contact between the survivors and the NOTIFICATION OFFICER upon the survivors being informed of the officer's death.
11. The Chief of Police should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with the family, as quickly as possible.
12. 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 officer's name, they should be advised to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin.

B. Assistance for Affected Officers

1. Officers who were on the scene or who arrived moments after an officer was critically injured or killed should be relieved as soon as feasible and preferably after they have been interviewed regarding the circumstances of the incident.
2. Police witnesses, other officers, and the officer's family members who may have been emotionally affected by the serious injury or death of another officer will attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing held by a trained mental health professional.

C. Assisting the Family at the Hospital

1. The first supervisor, other than the Chief or their representative, to arrive at the hospital becomes the HOSPITAL LIAISON. The HOSPITAL LIAISON is responsible for coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the officer's family, police officers, the press and others. These responsibilities include:
 - a. Arrange with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, the Chief of Police, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER, and only those others requested by the immediate survivors.
 - b. Arrange a separate area for fellow police officers and friends to assemble.
 - c. Establish a press staging area.
 - d. Ensure that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding an officer's condition to the family on a timely basis and before such information is released to others.
 - e. Notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased officer be directed to the City of Lexington, Department of Human Resources. The family should not receive any of these bills at their residence. This may require the HOSPITAL LIAISON to re-contact the hospital during normal business hours to ensure that proper billing takes place. Ensure that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital.
 - f. Arrange transportation for the family back to their residence.
2. If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer before death, they should be afforded that opportunity. A police official should "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 should advise the family of visitation policies and, in the event of death, explain why an autopsy is necessary.
3. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER(S) should remain at the hospital while the family is present.
4. Officers should not be overly protective of the family. This includes the sharing of specific information on how the officer met their demise, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased officer.

D. Support of the Family During the Wake and Funeral

1. The Chief of Police, or a designee, will meet with the officer's family at their home to determine their wishes regarding departmental participation in the preparation of the funeral or services. All possible assistance will be rendered.
2. With the approval of the family, the Chief will assign a FAMILY LIAISON Officer. The Chief will also designate a DEPARTMENT LIAISON Officer and a BENEFITS COORDINATOR.

E. Family Liaison Officer

1. 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 officer and their family.
2. This is not a decision-making position. This is a role of "facilitator" between the family and the Police Department.
3. Responsibilities of the FAMILY LIAISON Officer:
 - a. Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department.
 - b. Assist the family with funeral arrangements and make them aware of what the Department can offer if they decide to have a police funeral. If they choose the latter, brief the family on funeral procedure (i.e., 21-gun salute, presenting the flag, playing of taps).
 - c. Apprise the family of information concerning the death and the continuing investigation.
 - d. Provide as much assistance as possible, including overseeing travel and lodging arrangements for out-of-City family members, arranging for food for the family, meeting child care and transportation needs, etc.
 - e. Be constantly available to the family.
 - f. Determine what public safety, church, fraternal and labor organizations will provide in terms of financial assistance for out-of-City family travel, food for funeral attendees following the burial, etc.
 - g. Notify Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.), (573) 346-3911. Members are available to provide emotional support to surviving families.

- h. Notify The 100 Club, (603-623-9000).
- i. Carry a cell phone at all times and provide the number to the family.

F. Department Liaison Officer

- 1. This position is normally assigned to the Deputy Chief because of the need to effectively coordinate resources throughout the Department.
- 2. DEPARTMENT LIAISON OFFICER Responsibilities:
 - a. Work closely with the FAMILY LIAISON Officer to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled.
 - b. Handle the news media throughout the ordeal. If the family decides to accept an interview, an officer should attend to “screen” questions presented to the family so as not to jeopardize subsequent legal proceedings.
 - c. Meet with the following persons to coordinate funeral activities and establish an itinerary:
 - 1) Chief of Police and Division Commanders;
 - 2) Funeral Director;
 - 3) Family priest or minister;
 - 4) Cemetery Director;
 - 5) Honor Guard; and
 - 6) Silver Shield Association President.
 - d. Direct the funeral activities of the Department and visiting police departments according to the wishes of the family.
 - e. Issue a teletype message to include the following:
 - 1) Name of deceased;
 - 2) Date and time of death;
 - 3) Circumstances surrounding the death;
 - 4) Funeral arrangements (state if service will be private or a police

funeral);

- 5) Uniform to be worn;
 - 6) Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers; and
 - 7) Contact person and phone number for visiting departments to indicate their desire to attend and to obtain further information.
- f. Obtain an American flag. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief, notify the Chief's Office.
 - g. If the family desires a burial in uniform, select an officer to obtain a uniform and all accouterments (except weapons) and deliver them to the funeral home.
 - h. Assign members for usher duty at the church.
 - i. Arrange for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family.
 - j. Brief the Chief and staff concerning all funeral arrangements.
 - k. Ensure that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged for them during the funeral and procession.
 - l. Arrange for a stand-by doctor for the family, if necessary.
 - m. Coordinate traffic management, with other jurisdictions if necessary, during the viewing, funeral and procession. Arrange for a tow truck to be available along the procession route.
 - n. Assign an officer to remain at the family home during the viewing and funeral.
 - o. Maintain a roster of all departments sending personnel to the funeral, including:
 - 1) Name and address of responding agency;
 - 2) Name of the Chief of Police;
 - 3) Number of officers responding;
 - 4) Number of officers attending the reception after the funeral; and

5) Number of vehicles.

- p. Assist and coordinate with the Silver Shield Association in making the necessary accommodations (food, lodging, etc.).
- q. Acknowledge visiting and assisting departments
- r. Arrange for the Patrol Division to conduct routine residence checks of the survivor's home for 6-8 weeks following the funeral. This service is necessary since large amounts of money may pass through the residence and the survivors will be spending much time away from the home dealing with legal matters.

G. Benefits Coordinator

1. The BENEFITS COORDINATOR will gather information on ALL benefits/funeral payments available to the family. The BENEFITS COORDINATOR has the Department's full support to fulfill this responsibility to the survivors and is completely responsible for filing the appropriate benefit paperwork and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received.
2. The BENEFITS COORDINATOR is responsible for:
 - a. Filing Worker's Compensation claims and related paperwork.
 - b. Contacting the appropriate City of Lexington Offices without delay to ensure that the beneficiary receives death and retirement benefits, the officer's remaining paychecks and payment for remaining vacation and compensatory time.
 - c. Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments that are available to the family.
 - d. Setting up any special trust funds or educational funds.
 - e. Notifying police organizations such as 100 Club, Silver Shield Association, etc., of the death and to ensure that any and all entitlements are paid to the beneficiary(s). These agencies may also offer legal and financial counseling to the family at no cost.
 - f. Preparing a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that are due to the family, listing named beneficiaries, contacts at various benefits offices, and when they can expect to receive payment.

- g. Meeting with the surviving family a few days after the funeral to discuss the benefits they will receive. A copy of the prepared printout and any other related paperwork should be given to the family at this time.
 - 1) If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the child(ren) may be receiving.
 - 2) Attention should be given to the revocation of health benefits. The majority of health benefit providers allow a 30-day grace period before canceling or imposing monthly payments upon survivors.
- h. Meeting again with the family in about six months to make sure that they are receiving benefits.

H. Continued Support for the Family

1. Members of the Department must remain sensitive to the needs of the survivors long after the officer's death. There is no timetable to a survivor's grief process. More than half of the surviving spouses can be expected to develop a post-traumatic stress reaction to the tragedy.
2. Survivors should continue to feel they are a part of the "police family." They should be invited to Police activities to ensure continued contact.
3. Members of the Department are encouraged to keep in touch with the family. Close friends, co-workers and officials should arrange with the family to visit the home from time to time so long as the family expresses a desire to have these contacts continue.
4. The Chief of Police should observe the officer's death date with a short note to the family and/or flowers on the grave.
5. Holidays may be especially difficult for the family, particularly if small children are involved. Increased contact with the survivors and additional support is important at these times.
6. The FAMILY LIAISON acts as a long-term liaison with the surviving family who ensures that close contact is maintained between the Department and the survivors and that their needs are met for as long as they feel the need for support.
7. If no court proceedings surround the circumstances of the officer's death, the FAMILY LIAISON will relay all details of the incident to the family at the earliest opportunity.

8. If criminal violations surround the death, the FAMILY LIAISON will:
 - a. Inform the family of all new developments prior to press release;
 - b. Keep the family apprised of legal and parole proceedings;
 - c. Introduce the family to victim assistance specialists of the court;
 - d. Encourage the family to attend the trial, and accompany them whenever possible; and
 - e. Arrange for investigators to meet with the family at the earliest opportunity following the trial to answer all their questions.

I. Funeral Protocol

1. All members will maintain an excellent personal appearance. Uniforms and equipment must be in outstanding condition.
2. Uniforms
 - a. Class A uniform
 - b. Members of the Honor Guard will wear black gloves
 - c. Pallbearers will wear white gloves
 - d. A black sash will be worn across the badge
3. Funeral Services
 - a. The Office of the Chief may:
 - 1) Contact the Virginia State Police, Rockbridge Sheriff's Office or other regional agencies for assistance with funeral arrangements, if so desired by the family.
 - 2) Request from the Mayor that the United States and State flags be flown at half-staff at municipal government buildings from the time of death through the day following the funeral.
 - 3) Prepare condolence cards for issuance to all members of the immediate family and, as appropriate, in accordance with the family's wishes, direct the establishment of a memorial fund in the name of the deceased employee.

- b. Members who attend the funeral services will report to a predesignated assembly point away from the place of services for inspection and briefing.
- c. From the assembly point, members will march to the place of service, timing their arrival to permit immediate entry.
- d. Upon entering the building, members will remove their uniform hats, place them under their left arm, hat brim forward, and move in an orderly manner to the place reserved for them.
- e. Members will remain standing until all members are in their places and the command, "BE SEATED," is given.
- f. Members will sit with their hats upright in their laps, maintaining a military bearing throughout the service.
- g. At the end of the service, members, upon receiving the command, "OFFICERS RISE," will rise in unison and place their hats under their left arm preparatory to filing past the casket. They will hold their hats in this position until they have passed the casket and arrived outside.
- h. Upon leaving the building, members will replace their hats and assemble in formation at right angles to the hearse.
 - 1) Two ranks will be formed facing each other, leaving an aisle through which pallbearers and casket may pass.
 - 2) Members will be formed by height. They will normally be dressed at extended intervals but may be dressed at close intervals if space is limited.
 - 3) While waiting in formation, members will stand at parade rest.
- i. When the casket comes into view, the formation will be called to attention. The next command will be "PRESENT ARMS." All members salute and hold this salute until the casket is placed in the hearse. At this time, the command, "ORDER," "ARMS," will be given and members will return their hands to their sides.
- j. After the doors of the hearse are closed, the command "FIRST RANK (passenger side of hearse), RIGHT FACE" and "SECOND RANK, (driver's side of hearse) LEFT FACE," is given so that the two columns are facing the hearse.
- k. The Commander will then dismiss the formation with the command,

“OFFICERS DISMISSED.” The members will break ranks and leave in a quiet and orderly manner.

1. Members will then take their assigned places in the motorcade and proceed to the cemetery.

4. Gravesite Services

- a. Members will report to the places that have been reserved for them immediately upon arrival at the gravesite. Officers will stand in formation at parade rest.
- b. Just prior to the 21-gun salute and taps, officers will be brought to attention. The command “PRESENT ARMS” will be given. When the 21-gun salute and taps have concluded, the command “ORDER ARMS” will be given. Members will remain at attention until the officer in charge issues the command “OFFICERS DISMISSED.”

5. Honors Accorded

- a. Any Lexington Police Officer, who dies in the line of duty, will be accorded full honors, if requested by the survivors. This will include the casket watch during viewing, honor guard, pallbearers, firing squad, taps, military flag fold and presentation and motor escort. A bagpiper will also be made available if requested.
- b. The Honor Guard commander is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the Honor Guard, casket watch, pallbearers, firing squad, bugler, bagpiper and flag presentation.
- c. Casket Watch
 - 1) The casket watch is usually comprised of officers from the Honor Guard. However, volunteers may stand watch at the discretion of the Honor Guard commander. Officers who are assigned to the casket watch must present an excellent uniform appearance and conform to all current grooming regulations.
 - 2) The dress uniform, including hat, blouse and white gloves, will be worn for the casket watch. The watch will be divided into shifts with two officers standing thirty minutes at a time.
 - 3) If the family wishes, an informal watch can take place after the viewing has been concluded for the day.
 - 4) The casket watch moves in slow cadence. This includes

marching, movements and saluting. The official will post the watch and the officers will position themselves at or near the head and feet of the deceased officer.

d. Honor Guard

- 1) Members of the Honor Guard will assemble at a location near the service (church, funeral home, or cemetery) for inspection by the Chief of Police, or designee
- 2) Commands will be executed by the Honor Guard Commander.

e. Pallbearers

- 1) If pallbearers are requested by the family, they will be selected by the Chief of Police, or designee
- 2) Pallbearers will be under the direction of the Honor Guard commander. They will report to the funeral home as directed for instructions and seating arrangements.

J. Department Honors for Employees Killed in the Line of Duty

The Department will:

1. Dedicate a plaque in honor of the deceased employee to be mounted in a place of honor.
2. Award the Department Medal of Valor, posthumously to the employee and present same to the immediate family at a proper ceremony.
3. Retire the deceased employee's badge number.
4. Ensure that the appropriate department chaplain will arrange an annual memorial service to honor employees who have given their lives in service to the department.
5. Notify the Virginia Police Memorial Committee of the for inclusion on the police memorial.

K. Training

1. Training will be provided to officers on Line-of-Duty Death benefits in accordance with the Code of Virginia. The training will be provided by the City of Lexington Human Resources Department. Each employee entitled to benefits under Virginia Code §9.1- 407, shall receive initial training within 30 days of

employment, and again every two years thereafter, in accordance with the Code of Virginia, concerning the benefits available to officer or beneficiaries in case of disability or death in the line of duty.