

Bowie Police Department - General Orders



TITLE: LINE OF DUTY DEATHS OR SERIOUS INJURIES TO EMPLOYEES		NUMBER: 332
EFFECTIVE DATE: 12/21/12		REVIEW DATE:
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEW <input type="checkbox"/> AMENDS <input type="checkbox"/> RESCINDS		DATE:

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I. POLICY

It shall be the policy of the Bowie Police Department to promptly notify and provide assistance to the immediate family of any Bowie Police Department employee who dies or is seriously injured as a result of felonious or accidental circumstance.

Consistent with that assistance, the Department, at an appropriate time for the surviving family, will make the family aware of survivor benefits, as well as provide both tangible and intangible emotional support during this traumatic period.

The Department further realizes and understands that the actual funeral arrangements will properly reflect the wishes of the deceased member's family and that any conflict that arises will be decided in favor of the family's wishes.

II. CREDITS

Much of the content of this policy was printed with permission from Concerns of Police Survivors, Incorporated, based on a publication titled, "*Support Services to Surviving Families of Line-of-Duty Death.*"

III. PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCY NOTIFICATIONS

A. Prior to Making the Notification

1. The Department's Emergency Notification List for the particular employee will be consulted to determine whom, and in which order a particular notification will be made, in accordance with the member's wishes that completed the form.
2. The member's name will not be released to the media (on or off the record) until the appropriate notifications of those living in the area are made.
3. If there is knowledge of a medical problem with someone on the emergency notification list, medical personnel should be dispatched to the residence to coincide with the emergency notification.

4. Notification will always be made in person by the Chief of Police or the Deputy Chief of Police.

B. General Guidelines

1. Unless the situation dictates otherwise, the notification will never be made on the doorstep of those being notified.
2. Everyone at the residence should be asked to enter the residence and to sit down.
3. The person(s) being notified will be informed slowly and clearly of the information pertaining to the incident.
 - When conveying the information, the Officer's name should be used during the notification.
 - If specifics of the incident are known, those being notified must be given as much information as possible.
 - If the injury is potentially fatal, those notified will not be given a false sense of hope. If it is possible for the family to visit the member prior to his/her death, they most certainly should be afforded that opportunity.
4. If the person responsible for the emergency notification has been seriously affected, he/she should understand that showing emotions is perfectly acceptable and reactions by those being notified may include hysteria, anger, fainting, physical violence, shock, etc.
5. If those being notified want to go to the hospital, they should be transported via police vehicle, as it is highly recommended that they not drive themselves.
 - Should there be serious resistance and those being notified insist on driving, an officer should accompany them in their vehicle.
 - If small children are home during the notification, the notifying Officer(s) must be cognizant of the fact that babysitting needs may have to be arranged.
6. Once the family is enroute to the hospital, police communications should be notified so that information (along with an estimated time of arrival) can be relayed to Officers who may be at the hospital.
7. Additionally, a severely injured Officer's parents will be afforded the courtesy of personal notification if they live in the area.

C. Assisting the "Next-of-Kin" at the Hospital

1. This will be a priority of the Department and the Department will communicate with hospital staff in order to arrange for appropriate waiting facilities for the family and a separate area for fellow Officers.
2. The Officer-in-Charge at the hospital should ensure that medical personnel relay pertinent information to the family on the member's condition in a timely basis.
3. These same medical personnel should make the family aware of hospital policies about visitation with the injured member.
 - Concerns of Police Survivors recommend that Officers at the hospital should not be overly protective of the family.
4. As soon as the family arrives at the hospital, the Chief of Police, or designee, will ensure that the family is updated on the incident as soon as possible.
5. The Chief of Police, or designee, will make every effort to be present the entire time the family is at the hospital, unless called away, at which time, a representative will be appointed to arrange whatever assistance the family may need at the time.
6. The people who made the initial notification should be among those at the hospital.
7. Arrangements should be made for transportation of the family back to their residence.

D. Line of duty death notifications

1. If a Bowie Police Officer has died in the line of duty, the Prince George's County Police Chaplain will be notified, regardless of the hour, and will accompany the Chief or designee to assist with the notification.
2. It is suggested that words such as "died" or "dead" be used, rather than "gone away" or "passed away".
3. Additionally, the deceased Officer's parents will be afforded the courtesy of personal notification if they live in the area.
4. If immediate survivor(s)/family members are out-of-town, or do not reside in the area, the Department will request personal death notification from the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction in which the survivor(s) is located.
5. The Officer-in-Charge at the hospital should ensure that medical personnel assist with the notification.

6. These same medical personnel should make the family aware of hospital policies about viewing the body following demise, and explain why an autopsy is needed.
7. Idle promises should not be made to the family at this time (i.e., “We’ll promote him/her posthumously”, “We’ll retire his/her badge”).

E. Support for the Family During the Wake and Funeral

1. The Chief of Police or his/her designee will, with the approval of the family, appoint a “liaison Officer” to assist the family throughout the wake and funeral.

This appointment is a critical assignment and:

- The liaison Officer should know the deceased member and be aware of the family relationships;
- The Officer should not be so emotionally involved with the loss that he/she would become ineffective; and,
- The liaison Officer must know that this is not a decision-making position, but that this is a “facilitator” role between the family and the department.

2. The appointment will require the liaison Officer to:

- Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the Department;
- Meet with the family and tell them what his/her responsibilities will be during this time;
- Meet with the family concerning funeral arrangements (if any), since most Officers have not pre-arranged their wishes for the handling of their own funeral, the family will most likely need to decide all aspects of the funeral;
- The family should be made aware of what the Department can offer in the way of assistance if the family decides to have a “law enforcement funeral;”
- Know all information concerning the death and continuing investigation to answer family questions;
- Provide as much assistance as possible;
- Be constantly available throughout this traumatic time;
- Ascertain what police fraternal organization involvement will be, if any;

- See that the surviving parent(s) are afforded recognition and will have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and funeral procession;
- See that the family is briefed on the funeral procedure;
- Assist family members in securing adequate babysitting help for their needs, if necessary;
- Accommodate all possible family requests for assistance for communicating those desires to the Chief of Police;
- Coordinate efforts with the family minister, Police Chaplain, Funeral Director, and Cemetery Director regarding funeral arrangements;
- Compile information concerning the funeral arrangements and any other pertinent information needed to complete the teletype notification as follows:
 - Name of deceased,
 - Date/Time of death,
 - Funeral arrangements (to include if service is private or formal, police funeral to include F.O.P. services),
 - Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers,
 - Uniform to be worn,
- Authorize mourning ribbons for a thirty-day period for line-of-duty deaths;
- Complete an itinerary for the day of the funeral services;
- Brief the Chief of Police concerning all funeral arrangements;
- Determine the location of the Officer's personal property (i.e., Evidence Room), being particularly attentive to wedding rings and religious medals;
- If the family desires a burial in uniform, obtain or designate an Officer to obtain a uniform and all accouterments and deliver them to the funeral home;
- Consider a casket watch;
- Determine if the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief of Police and notify the Chief;
- Obtain an American Flag, which can usually be obtained from the funeral home;
- Ensure that mourning bunting is erected at the Police facility;

- Maintain a roster of all departments sending personnel to the funeral and assist with accommodations;
 - Arrange for funeral escort;
 - Arrange for an ambulance to be present at the cemetery;
 - Assist the family and visiting departments with transportation after the funeral; and
 - Acknowledge visiting or assisting departments with letters of appreciation.
3. The family will be made aware of, and have access to, other public safety survivors or other support groups, such as:
- Concerns of Police Survivors 301-599-0445
 - Compassionate Friends 202-244-1026

F. Relations With the Media and Release of Information

1. While the Department recognizes the importance of providing the public, via the media, with accurate and complete information, and will involve the media during this crisis situation, the Department will withhold certain information concerning a member's serious injuries or death in the following circumstances:
- If a survivor has not been notified, and/or
 - If the premature release of certain information would/could hamper the investigation into the incident.
2. If an investigation is being conducted by an outside agency (such as PGPD Homicide, etc.), the release of information by this Department will be coordinated with their investigators.

G. Benefits Information Provided to Surviving Family

1. Another responsibility of the "liaison Officer" will be to meet with the family concerning information about benefits to which the surviving family may be entitled.
2. The liaison Officer will meet with the Chief of Police and Personnel Director as soon as possible to gather information on behalf of the family, or will arrange a meeting between the families for this purpose.

H. Long-Term Contact With Family Maintained

The Department, through its liaison Officer, or as directed by the Chief of Police, will maintain contact with the surviving family by, among other things:

1. Frequently communicating with survivors to reiterate the Department's interest and support for the family;
2. Assisting the surviving family with the completion of applicable forms and papers;
3. Providing words of encouragement to the family;
4. Accompanying survivors to Court appearances, as necessary; and,
5. Assisting the family with problems of which the Department is best-equipped to handle.

IV. PERSONNEL SUPPORT SERVICES

A. In addition to the types of leave and benefits provided by the City and the Department to support its employees, the Department will provide support services to its employees that will include, and may not be limited to:

1. Ensuring that information is provided pertaining to employee benefits;
2. Keeping employees informed via newsletters, publications, and other methods about newly-enacted or revised laws, City of Bowie policies, Department policies, and other issues that impact them;
3. Providing counseling, as necessary and appropriate, regarding retirement options, savings plan options, assistance with personal problems, etc.;
4. Assisting and supporting the surviving family of a Department member seriously injured or killed in the line-of-duty; and,
5. Involving itself to the extent necessary and appropriate to assist one of its members with a sudden, unforeseen event in which the employee and his/her family would benefit.
6. Advising the family of the role of police associations (FOP, HEROES, COPS, etc.) and the nature of support programs that they sponsor for law enforcement survivors.

B. The Bowie Police Department has an agreement with a licensed Psychologist knowledgeable in police affairs and the nature of law enforcement to which employees can avail themselves.

An employee desirous of speaking with this Psychologist should contact their supervisor or the Captain for information.

C. Employees may also consult the Prince George's County Police Chaplain.

V. BENEFITS/CLAIMS

There are federal and state benefits to which beneficiaries of Officers killed in the line of duty are entitled. The following is provided so that the liaison Officer can initiate contacts as soon as possible after an Officer's death.

- A. Federal: contact the office and request claim forms and a list of necessary documents to be returned with the claim.

U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Justice Assistance
Public Safety Officers Benefits Program
810 7th St. N.W. Room 4221
Washington, DC 20531

- B. State: will fax or mail a list of documents necessary to file a claim.

Maryland State Retirement Administration
800-492-5909 or 410-625-5555
www.sra.state.md.us