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Did you know... about the PSOB Appeals Process?

1. A claimant survivor is notified by letter that the PSOB claim has not been approved. Along with the letter is the “determination” that outlines the basis for the decision and the information regarding the appeals process.

2. The claimant survivor must have 33 days from the date on the letter to provide notice to the PSOB Office of the intent to appeal the decision.

3. When the PSOB Office receives this notice of intent to appeal, a Hearing Officer is identified and assigned to the claim.

4. The Hearing Officer contacts the claimant survivor directly to discuss the appeals process and next steps.

5. The Hearing Officer recomposes the entire claim, and accepts and considers any newly submitted information. At the request of the claimant survivor, a hearing may be held at a date and location convenient for the claimant survivor.

6. Once the Hearing Officer’s determination has been submitted, the claimant survivor is notified by letter of the outcome. Should the Hearing Officer reverse the initial decision and the BJA Director upholds the decision, the claim is approved and the benefit is paid.

7. If the Hearing Officer does not reverse the original determination, the claimant survivor can request a second appeal to the BJA Director.

8. If the claimant survivor requests a second appeal to the BJA Director, the Director reconsider the entire claim, and accepts and considers any newly submitted information before making a final agency decision and notifying the claimant survivor in writing.

Enacted in 1976, the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) Program provides death, disability, and education benefits to those eligible for the program. The PSOB benefit for eligible deaths occurring in FY 2008 is $303,046. PSOB partners with key national public safety organizations, including the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, to provide information and support to survivors and surviving agencies of America’s fallen officers.

We want to hear from you...

One of the difficult aspects of sudden death is that it allows no time for goodbyes or final words. It is something many people struggle with after an unexpected loss. Some people are comforted knowing that their last moments with their loved one were happy, that they expressed their love. But life isn’t always that way. In human relationships, we sometimes argue or disagree, we say hurtful things, or we fail to say the loving things we wish we had. When someone dies suddenly, loved ones are sometimes left with feelings of guilt or regret. Perhaps there are things that were unused, unresolved, or just unfinished at the time of your loved one’s death. What has helped you come to terms with that? What can you offer to others who may be struggling with these same issues?

If you want to share some thoughts about your experiences, please send your story as a Word document, or in the body of an e-mail, to jwoodall@firehero.org. Or, if you don’t do computers, send a typed or neatly handwritten copy to:

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that I should pursue it. I knew that Larry was still taking care of me even after his death.

The next night, I was having a really bad time. Larry’s death was beginning to be real, I could not stop screaming and crying. I heard a voice say, “Please don’t do this to yourself. Everything is going to be OK.” I was led to a drawer in our bedroom, and when I opened it, there was a pair of Larry’s gloves. The voice told me to put the gloves on, and when I did I could feel his hands holding mine. It seemed so real! It was just like the movie “Ghost” and was so comforting.

Larry’s birthday was January 10th, and after getting through “Ghost” and was so comforting.

I have heard stories like these over the years from people who have lost loved ones, and I always thought they were just imagining these things happened. Maybe I did, too, but whatever happened, I was comforted by each event. I would like to think that as our loved ones pass to the other life, they are still able to see us and hear us. I thank God for allowing these messages to pass through to help us through these terrible times.

I hope my stories will help others who experience similar circumstances know they are not alone and they are not imagining things.

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Crystal Rathbun,
Wife of Roger “Bo” Rathbun (2000-WY)

This poem made such an impression on me when I lost the love of my life. It means so much to me still, and whenever I read it I think of Bo and it gives me peace. I have it laminated and send it in all of my sympathy cards to friends and family. I have received a lot of responses from those I send it to, saying how much comfort it brought them.

Editor’s Note: There are several versions of this poem, by Henry Scott Holland, Canon of St. Paul’s Cathedral, London. It is taken from a sermon delivered at St. Paul’s in 1910.

Death is nothing at all.

I have only slipped away into the next room.
I am I, and you are you,
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.

Call me by the old familiar name.
Speak of me in the easy way which you always used.
Put no difference into your tone.
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow.

Laugh as we always laughed
At the little jokes that we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.

Let my name be ever the household word
that it always was.

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Patsy B. Rogers (continued)

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When I wrote this, I was thinking about how there is so much to life we don’t see or we forget to think about. There is a spiritual world that is moving and working around us every day. And because we can’t see it, it often goes unnoticed. When someone dies, it is the same way. We can only see the earthly view - the lifeless body, the tears. And most of us probably fail to truly realize, especially in our grief, that the spiritual life of that person is continuing on. And so this is where this comes from. I wrote it to a melody in my head, so it’s actually lyrics.

It was a beautiful moment,
When he first heard that voice.
It was a beautiful moment,
“Welcome Home, son”
It was a beautiful moment.

They see the grief on each others’ face.
It will take time a while to erase.
The smile on his face as wide as the ocean is deep.
Happiness while those on Earth still weep.
They fall to their knees and cry out “Why me?”
He falls to his knees and says, “All praise to You be.”
It was a beautiful moment.

It was a beautiful moment;
All Heaven rejoiced.
It was a beautiful moment,
When he first heard that voice.
It was a beautiful moment,
“Welcome Home, son”
It was a beautiful moment.

They tried and tried but it was all in vain.
There was nothing there left to save.
The sound of death echoed through the room.
All they could hear was the stillness of gloom.
But for him - the beautiful song the choir sings
and the flutter of angels’ wings
As they drew near,
Erasing all his fear.
It was a beautiful moment.
It was a beautiful moment;
All Heaven rejoiced.

---

Jody Rodgers
Daughter of Gregory E. Rodgers (1999-OH)

It was a beautiful moment
When he first heard that voice.
It was a beautiful moment
“Welcome Home, son”
It was a beautiful moment.

They see the grief on each others’ face.
It will take time a while to erase.
The smile on his face as wide as the ocean is deep.
Happiness while those on Earth still weep.
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