

# **PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **VOLUME 1 – Operations Manual**

### **LINE OF DUTY DEATH**

**MP105.02 04/06 – R**

The death of any member of the Phoenix Fire Department while on duty, or while undergoing medical treatment for any injury or disease resulting from such duty, is considered a line of duty death. This also includes the death of a Fire Department member while traveling in connection with such duty or while engaged in fire fighting or EMS activities off duty.

This procedure defines the policies and responsibilities to be followed in the event of a line of duty death, and can be escalated in the event of multiple deaths or a number of members seriously injured.

#### **BATTALION CHIEF'S RESPONSIBILITIES**

In the event of a line of duty death, the on-duty Battalion Chief shall insure that the following occurs:

1. Notify the Fire Chief, the Assistant Chief of Personnel Services, the Assistant Chief of Operations, the South Deputy and the Public Information Officer.
2. Secure the scene of the incident with the assistance of Fire Investigations and Police Department personnel.
3. Direct the Public Information Officer and Alarm Headquarters to withhold release of personal data relating to the employee or the death, pending notification of next of kin.
4. Have the Safety Officer respond to the scene.
5. Begin to gather all available information concerning the incident and circumstances leading to the death.
6. Assign personnel from Personnel Services to assemble as much personal data as possible concerning the deceased. Particular information needed includes name, date of birth, social security number, marital status, dependents, and name(s) and addresses of next of kin.
7. Assign a Performance Auditor to secure the personal effects of the deceased and deliver them to Fire Administration.
8. Establish a record of all actions, contacts, requests and other pertinent data. This information will be furnished to the Survivor Action Officer when assigned.

#### **NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN**

Prompt and judicious notification of the next of kin is of the utmost importance in the case of a line of duty death. Notification shall be made by an official representative of the Fire Department, through personal contact if possible.

The official notification serves to assure the next of kin of the validity of the information and to provide a knowledgeable source of information concerning the death.

The Fire Chief is responsible for the notification of next of kin. The Assistant Chief of Personnel Services will make the specific assignment of this duty (Notification Officer). In incidents involving multiple deaths or serious injuries, more than one notification officer should be assigned.

### **NOTIFICATION OFFICER**

The Notification Officer is responsible for making the initial contact with the next of kin. This shall be done in person whenever possible. This official notification must be made before any details of a death are released to the news media.

The Notification Officer should be prepared to assist the next of kin with the immediate emotional trauma associated with the notification. A friend of the family or a clergy member may be of valuable assistance at this time.

The Notification Officer should be prepared to stay with the next of kin until a family member or friend arrives, or as long as requested.

The Notification Officer shall:

1. Wear dress uniform with tie (if time permits).
2. Assign a Fire Department member to accompany him/her, also in dress uniform with tie.
3. Have an official Fire Department identification card in their possession.
4. Familiarize themselves with the circumstances of the death and the personal data concerning the deceased before making the notification.
5. Once the notification has been made, the Notification Officer will advise Alarm Headquarters and the Public Information Officer. An official announcement may then be made and details may be released to the news media.

### **SURVIVOR ACTION OFFICER**

The Fire Chief will appoint a Survivor Action Officer to act as representative in providing liaison with the next of kin. To provide a sense of continuity and familiarity for the surviving family, it may be advantageous in some cases for the Notification Officer to assume the duties of the Survivor Action Officer. The Survivor Action Officer is a special staff assignment. As a direct representative of the Fire Chief, the Survivor Action Officer will receive the full cooperation of the entire Fire Department. Functionally, the Survivor Action Officer will report directly to the Assistant Chief of Personnel Services.

The Survivor Action Officer is responsible for the management of several important activities. The principal concern is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. The Survivor Action Officer will render whatever assistance is necessary to settle the personal affairs of the deceased member and assist the next of kin and immediate family through the crisis. In incidents involving multiple deaths, more than one Survivor Action Officer should be assigned.

### **SURVIVOR ACTION COMMITTEE**

The Survivor Action Officer also coordinates the activities of the Survivor Action Committee. The Survivor Action Committee will consist of a number of personnel assigned to handle specific aspects of the funeral arrangements and to assist the surviving family. These assignments will be made by the Assistant Chief of Personnel Services and include:

FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER...on call to the surviving family 24 hours per day as a logistical contact. Provides transportation for family and maintains constant communication with the Survivor Action Officer.

FUNERAL OFFICER...provides coordination and interaction with: 1) The Funeral Home Director; 2) The Minister and church to arrange the funeral service; 3) The agency responsible for the cemetery.

PROCESSION OFFICER...arranges and directs the funeral procession.

DEPUTY CHIEF/SHIFT COMMANDER...provides interaction and coordination with Procession Officer.

DEPUTY CHIEF/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT...provides necessary support functions.

LOCAL 493 OFFICER...makes notification to and assists with activities of pallbearers, honorary pallbearers and ushers.

Other assignments will be made as necessary by the Assistant Chief of Personnel Services at the request of the Survivor Action Officer.

It is important for the Survivor Action Committee to convene as soon as is practical after the line of duty death to begin making the necessary arrangements. This becomes especially important when the line of duty death occurs on or immediately prior to a weekend or holiday.

**In all cases, the level of Fire Department participation with the funeral arrangements will be at the discretion of the surviving family,** In incidents involving multiple deaths, planning funeral arrangements between the surviving families will require the assignment of more than one officer.

## **PALLBEARERS**

The pallbearers for a line of duty death will be eight members of the Fire Department with the family's approval. The family may request certain individuals to act as pallbearers. In the absence of such a request, the Survivor Action Officer will appoint a friend of the deceased to form the party of pallbearers. The Funeral Officer will coordinate the pallbearers' activities with the Funeral Director.

## **USHERS**

The ushers to be used for church services and visitation will be ten Fire Department members. In the absence of family requests for specific individuals to act as ushers, the Survivor Action Officer will appoint a friend of the deceased to form the party of ushers.

The Funeral Officer will coordinate the ushers' activities with the Funeral Director.

## **PERIOD OF MOURNING**

Following notification of the next of kin, a C.A.D. announcement will be made informing all members of the line of duty death.

EXAMPLE:

"The Fire Chief regrets to announce the death of (rank), (name) who died in the line of duty." A brief description of the circumstances will follow.

Immediately after the announcement, all flags on Fire stations and other Department facilities will be lowered to half-mast and all badges will be shrouded. Flags will remain at half-mast until the day following the funeral, and badge shrouds will be worn for 30 days after the funeral.

## **FUNERAL/PROCESSION UNIFORM**

Members attending the funeral in uniform shall wear dress uniform to include tie and badge shroud.

Members assigned to apparatus stationed along the procession route shall also be in dress uniform to include tie and badge shroud. They will take a position near the apparatus and maintain an orderly, visible and respectful formation until the entire procession has passed their position.

## **EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION INFORMATION**

The Emergency Notification Card is a confidential record, completed by members of the Fire Department, indicating next of kin and emergency notification information. This

information will be used only in case of an emergency involving a member of the Department and will remain confidential for all other purposes.

Each employee will be asked to complete a card at the time of original employment with the Department. The card will be reviewed annually during the member's performance appraisal. Updates to the information may also be made at any time by sending a revised card to the Personnel Services Section at Fire Administration.

Members of the Fire Department should list at least two persons to contact in case of emergency. These should include immediate family members, close friends and preferred clergy members, if any. This information should include work addresses and phone numbers where applicable.