

NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT		
Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Line of Duty Serious Injury or Death		AOM: P-154
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [22.2.3]		Issuing Authority <hr/> John D. Cartledge Chief of Police
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I. Introductory Discussion

This policy provides direction and guidance in those cases where an employee has been severely injured or killed and is intended to ensure the provisions of the proper support and emotional care for the employee’s family during this difficult time.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Northampton Police Department to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of any personnel who is seriously injured or dies in the line

of duty [22.2.3]

III. Procedure

This assistance will be provided to all present employees injured or killed while on duty, or while performing a police-related function when off duty.

1. The Chief of Police may institute certain parts of this policy in cases of natural death.
2. The family shall decide funeral arrangements for the deceased officer, with their wishes taking precedence over the Department's.
3. Survivors shall be defined as: immediate family members of the deceased officer to include spouse, children, parents, siblings, next of kin, fiancée, and/or significant others.

IV. Departmental Notifications

It shall be the responsibility of the Officer in Charge (OIC) to notify the Chief of Police, Captain of Administration, and the Captain of Operations when an officer has suffered severe injuries or has died.

V. Notification of Next of Kin or Immediate Survivor

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the Chief of Police to ensure immediate next of kin or family notification when an officer has suffered severe injuries or died.
- B. As a general statement, the OIC may be the officer most able to immediately respond to make personal notification. As such, the OIC will normally be assigned as the Notification Officer. If necessary, the Chief of Police may assign another department member to make the family notification.
- C. The Department shall not release the name of a seriously injured or deceased officer before the immediate family is notified. Under no circumstances should the family learn of a serious injury or death from other than a representative of the department.
- D. *AOM P154.a Employee Information Form* may be utilized to determine any pertinent information necessary for the notification.
- E. In cases where the next of kin or immediate survivor has a medical problem, medical personnel should be available at the residence to coincide with the death notification (Refer to *AOM O610tb1 Death Notifications*).
- F. Notification shall always be made in person and never alone. A close friend, clergy official, or other appropriate person should accompany the

- Notification Officer.
1. It is preferred that at least two officers make the notification and that they travel in separate vehicles in case the officers need to separately provide assistance thereafter.
 2. If appropriate support personnel cannot be located immediately, notification shall not be delayed.
 3. Immediate notification is always important, but is critical in those cases where the immediate survivor may have an opportunity to get to the hospital prior to the death of the officer.
- G. The death notification should never be made at the doorstep.
1. The Notification Officer should ask to be admitted to the house and inform family members slowly and clearly of the injury status or death of the officer.
 2. If the officer has died, the family shall be told clearly and in such a way as to eliminate any false hope.
- H. In cases where the family requests to visit the hospital, they shall 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.
- I. If young children are at home, the Notification Officer must arrange for babysitting needs. This may involve co-workers, friends, or whoever is deemed appropriate, transportation of children to a relative's home, or a similar arrangement.
- J. The severely injured or deceased officer's parents should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification, if possible.
- K. If immediate survivors live beyond the Northampton area, the Notification Officer will ensure the appropriate jurisdiction is contacted to request a personal notification. In addition to the fax message, the Notification Officer shall phone the other jurisdiction by telephone to coordinate the notification process.
- L. The Chief of Police and a Command Level Officer shall respond to the residence or hospital to meet with the family as quickly as possible.
- M. In the event of a serious injury or on-duty death, the external monitoring of police frequencies by the media and others 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 shall be requested by the OIC to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin.

VI. Assistance for Other Effected Personnel

- A. Officers that were on the scene or who arrived moments after an officer was

critically injured or killed should be relieved as quickly as possible.

- B. Police witnesses and other officers who may have been emotionally affected by the serious injury or death of another officer shall attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing held by a trained mental health professional.

VII. Assisting the Family at the Hospital

- A. The Chief of Police will designate an official to serve as Hospital Liaison.
- B. The Hospital Liaison is responsible for coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the officer's family, police officers, the press, and others.
- C. Working in close cooperation with the hospital staff, the Hospital Liaison's responsibilities shall include:
 1. Arrange with hospital personnel to provide an appropriate waiting facility for the family, the Chief of Police, Notification Officer and other persons as authorized by the family.
 2. Arrange a separate area for fellow police officers and friends to assemble.
 3. Establish a press staging area.
 4. 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.
 5. Notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills relating to the injured or deceased officer be directed to the City of Northampton Police Department.
 6. 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.
 7. Ensure that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital.
 8. Arrange transportation for the family back to their residence.
 9. If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer before death, they should be afforded that opportunity.
 - a. A police official or medical professional 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.
 - b. Medical personnel should advise the family of visitation policies and, in the event of death, explain why an autopsy is necessary.
- D. The Notification Officer should remain at the hospital while the family is present or until properly relieved.

Officers should be open and not overly protective of the family. This openness includes the sharing of specific information on how the officer's serious injury or death occurred, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased officer.

VIII. Support of the Family during the Wake and Funeral

- A. The Chief of Police 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.
- B. With the approval of the family, the Chief of Police will assign a Family Liaison and designate a Department Liaison Officer.

IX. Family Liaison

- A. The selection of a Family Liaison is a critical assignment. An attempt should be made to assign someone who enjoyed a close relationship with the officer and their family. Assignment shall be voluntary.
- B. This is not a decision-making position. This is a role of "facilitator" between the family and the Northampton Police Department.
- C. Responsibilities of the Family Liaison shall include:
 - 1. Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the department.
 - 2. Assist the family with funeral arrangements and make them aware of what the department can offer if they decide to have a police funeral. (Honor Guard, presenting the flag, playing of taps, etc.)
 - 3. Apprise the family of information concerning the death and the continuing investigation.
 - 4. Provide as much assistance as possible, including overseeing travel and lodging arrangements for out-of-town family members, arranging for food for the family, or meeting child care and transportation needs.
 - 5. Be constantly available to the family.
 - 6. Determine what public safety, church, fraternal and labor organizations will provide in terms of financial assistance for out-of-town family travel, or food for funeral attendees following the burial.

X. Department Liaison Officer

- A. This position is normally assigned to a Command Level Officer because of the need to effectively coordinate resources throughout the department.
- B. Responsibilities of the Department Liaison shall include:
 - 1. Work closely with the Family Liaison to ensure that the needs of the family are fulfilled.
 - 2. Serve as media liaison throughout the process. 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.
3. Meet with the following persons to coordinate funeral activities and establish an itinerary: Chief of Police, Captains, Traffic Supervisor, Funeral Director, Family priest or minister, Cemetery Director, and Color Guard.
 4. Direct the funeral activities of the department and visiting police departments according to the wishes of the family. In cases where there are police agencies attending, a summary sheet of directions, parking locations, and staging areas shall be made available to all agencies that are attending.
 5. Cause a LEAPS message to be sent that includes the following:
 - a. Name of deceased
 - b. Date and time of death
 - c. Circumstances surrounding the death
 - d. Funeral arrangements (private or police funeral)
 - e. Uniform to be worn
- C. Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers, if appropriate
- D. Contact person and phone number for visiting departments to indicate their desire to attend and to obtain further information.
- E. Provide an American Flag for the funeral. If the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief, ensure that the Chief is advised prior to the ceremony.
- F. If the family desires a burial in uniform, select an officer to obtain a uniform and all accouterments (except weapons and duty belt) and deliver them to the funeral home.
- G. Assign members for usher duty at the church.
- H. Arrange for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family.
- I. Advise the Chief and staff concerning all funeral arrangements.
- J. Ensure that the surviving parents are afforded recognition and that proper placement is arranged for them during the funeral procession.
- K. Coordinate traffic management with the Traffic Supervisor and with other jurisdictions if necessary, during the viewing, funeral and procession.
- L. Assign an officer to remain at the family home for security during the viewing and funeral.
- M. 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
 5. Number of vehicles
- N. Assist in making the necessary accommodations (food, lodging).
- O. Acknowledge visiting and assisting departments.

XI. Funeral Protocol

- A. All personnel shall maintain an excellent personal appearance. Uniforms and equipment shall be in outstanding condition.
- B. The Chief of Police will designate the uniform for the funeral. All personnel will wear white gloves and a black mourning band on badge.
- C. The Chief of Police will designate an Officer-in-Charge (OIC) of the Honor Guard who will coordinate the funeral procedure in accordance with the wishes of the family and established protocol.
- D. The OIC of the Honor Guard is responsible for coordinating and directing the activities of the Color Guard detail, casket watch, honor guard, bag piper, pallbearers, bugler, and flag presentation in cooperation with the Department Liaison Officer.

XII. Graveside Services

- A. Personnel will report to the places that have been reserved for them immediately upon arrival at the gravesite.
- B. Just prior to the playing of taps, the command "Honor Guard, Attention" will be given. Members will stand at attention. At the command "Present Arms", personnel will salute and hold this salute until the command "Order Arms".

XIII. Honors, Color Guard, Casket Watch and Pallbearers

Any Northampton 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 the viewing, color guard, pallbearers, taps, military flag fold and presentation, and escort.

XIV. Procedural Variation

- A. The procedures outlined in this policy shall be followed in most cases. Any changes made necessary by a shortage of staff, the unusual size of the funeral, the

- type of service, the physical arrangement of the place of service or for any other reason shall be made by the Department Liaison Officer.
- B. Any additional honors to be accorded to deceased members of the department or to deceased members of other law enforcement agencies shall be at the discretion of the Chief of Police.

XV. Employee Information Form

- A. To provide the department with current notification data and other information necessary in the event of a serious injury or death in the line of duty, each department member will be given the opportunity to complete *AOM P154.a Employee Information Form*. Completion of this form shall be strictly voluntary.
- B. It is imperative that the confidentiality of this form be protected. The information on this form shall be used only for the intended purpose.
- C. Once completed, the form will be sealed in an envelope and marked "TO BE OPENED ONLY IN THE EVENT OF SERIOUS INJURY OR LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH". The envelope will then be secured in the employee's Personnel File. The member will be responsible to insure that all information is kept current and correct.