

Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification

1052.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. The purpose of this policy is to describe the communication activities that should occur in the event a member is seriously injured or killed in the line of duty. The policy establishes a priority for notifications, outlines steps for conducting each set of notifications, and identifies roles and responsibilities.

1052.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Burnsville Fire Department to ensure, to the extent reasonably practicable, that immediate and compassionate notification is made to the family of members who are seriously injured, hospitalized, or killed in the line of duty. The Department shall make it a priority to offer assistance and support to the member's family.

1052.3 PROCEDURE

- a. For the purposes of this policy, a serious injury or hospitalization is defined as a medical condition that is life-threatening or has the potential to disable the member for a substantial period of time.
- b. The Incident Commander (IC) or Captain at the scene of the serious injury or death will immediately notify the Assistant Fire Chief and provide the necessary information.
- c. The Assistant Fire Chief will be the point of contact for making assignments and will coordinate actions with the Fire Chief and others.
- d. All inquiries related to the incident should be referred to the IC, the Public Information Spokesperson, or the Captain, as appropriate.
- e. In the event of the death of a member, the Captain must immediately initiate the procedures in the Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigations Policy.

1052.4 DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

The Assistant Fire Chief, in coordination with the Fire Chief or the authorized designee, will assign a two-person notification team consisting of either an Assistant Fire Chief and department chaplain or two Assistant Fire Chiefs to locate and inform the member's family. If more than one member has been seriously injured or killed in an incident, separate teams will be assigned to each affected family. If possible the notification team may bring another department member as noted on the members emergency contact information. The team should:

- a. Contact the Administration Division to obtain information regarding the member's next of kin.
- b. Call back additional staff, if necessary.

1052.4.1 NOTIFICATION TEAM RESPONSE

The notification team shall make the necessary family notification as quickly as practicable, with the goal of making the notification within two hours of the Captain learning of the serious injury or death. The notification team should:

- a. Gather and validate as much information about the incident as possible.
- b. Wear the dress uniform, if possible.
- c. Plan the appropriate timing and schedule when it is necessary to make the notification to more than one person or family group (e.g., spouse and parent).
- d. Meet prior to making the notification to establish roles of the team members and allow the exchange of known facts.
- e. Determine if the Captain, Assistant Fire Chief, or Fire Chief is aware of a special relationship between the deceased member's family and another member. If so, it may be appropriate to have that member accompany the notification team. Prior to arrival, the team should clarify the member's role in the notification process.

1052.4.2 NOTIFYING THE FAMILY

The team members should adhere to the following notification guidelines:

- a. The team should not park directly in front of the family's home or workplace. The person who will make the notification should make introductions at the door and ask to be invited in.
- b. Notification should be made briefly and directly.
- c. Information regarding precipitating factors or information that is not verified should not be provided until an investigation has been completed.
- d. Team members should communicate the support and sympathy of the Fire Chief and all members of the Department.
- e. Team members should ask family members whether they would like the team to notify other parties, such as clergy or grief counselors.
- f. Offer to bring to the hospital

1052.4.3 NOTIFICATION OF FAMILY OUT OF THE AREA

If the immediate next of kin of the deceased employee lives more than two hours away, the Assistant Fire Chief may make arrangements to have someone in the family's area make the notification. The following should be considered:

- a. Whether the notification should be made by the local clergy or another person in the area who has a relationship with the family or with the assistance of the local fire department/law enforcement.
- b. Whether the fire department in the family's city of residence may be the most appropriate entity to make the notification or whether that department can assist in obtaining information about the family.
- c. Whoever is selected to make the notification should be provided with the information contained in this policy.
- d. The notification plan must include a coordinated telephone call with the family and the Assistant Fire Chief.

1052.4.4 INTERNAL Department NOTIFICATIONS

The following internal notifications should be made in advance of any media release:

- a. All on-duty Captains should be notified.
- b. All employees should be notified as soon as possible after the family notification is made.

1052.4.5 GOVERNING BODY AND LABOR NOTIFICATIONS

The Captain will ensure that additional notifications are made as required, after the next-of-kin notification. Notifications that are required as soon as practicable after a confirmed line-of-duty death or serious injury include the following:

- a. Elected officials or board of directors
- b. City Manager
- c. Employee labor representatives
- d. Department Health and Safety Officer, who will make the necessary notifications in coordination with the Captain
- e. Other notifications as determined by the Fire Chief

1052.4.6 EXTERNAL NOTIFICATIONS

The following external notifications will be made:

- a. Notification of the State Duty Officer

- b. Notification to the Minnesota State Fire Marshal
- c. Notification to the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MNOSHA)
- d. Notification to the United States Fire Administration
- e. Notification to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF)
- f. Notification to the U.S. Department of Justice Public Safety Officers' Benefit (PSOB) Program
- g. Notification to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- h. Notification to other agencies as mandated by federal and state law and local ordinance
- i. Arrange CISD, contact fire department Mental Health consultant
- j. Minnesota One Hundred Club
- k. Notification of the Minnesota Fire Service Foundation

Indicate that you are making a preliminary report and that details will be provided later. Do not speculate on cause of death.

1052.5 FAMILY SUPPORT

The Assistant Fire Chief should appoint a Family Support Liaison, who should refer to the Family Support Liaison Policy for duties and responsibilities.

In the event of a line-of-duty death, the Fire Chief or the authorized designee should appoint a funeral detail officer to administer in accordance to the MN State Fire Chiefs MN Fire Service Ceremonies and Protocols Guidebook.

1052.6 NEWS MEDIA AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS

It is the policy of the Burnsville Fire Department to follow the News Media and Community Relations Policy when communicating with the media. In the case of a line-of-duty death, additional considerations include but are not limited to:

- a. The employee's family must have received proper notification prior to any information regarding the identity of the deceased being released to the media.
- b. All information must be validated prior to its release to the media.

The Public Information Spokesperson or the authorized designee shall be the spokesperson on most aspects of these events. However, the announcement or

confirmation of a line-of-duty death and/or the release of the employee's name should be made by the Fire Chief or the authorized designee.

Prior to confirmation that the employee's family has been notified, no details will be released concerning the death. If the news media are on-scene and aware of the death, the Public Information Spokesperson will simply confirm that a death has occurred and communicate the department's compassion and concern for the employee's family and colleagues. The Public Information Spokesperson will advise the media that the full details will be provided as soon as they are known and after proper notification of next of kin has been made.

If an employee death occurs in the midst of ongoing news coverage of a fire or other emergency, the Public Information Spokesperson will focus on handling the details concerning the death. Another trained spokesperson will be assigned to handle the media relations for the incident.

1052.7 FIREFIGHTER LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH EMERGENCY CHECKLIST

- Control two-way radio communications.
- Note and record exact location of accident/body discovery.
- Impound protective clothing.
- Arrange procession to Medical Examiners Office and fire staff to stay with firefighter, in the building
- Notify City Administration
- Assemble chaplain or support group to notify next-of-kin.
- Arrange to notify department and city personnel.
- Prepare statement for the media.
- Ask the coroner to order an autopsy and toxicology test. Specify exact blood carbon monoxide and alcohol levels.
- Notify the State Duty Officer
- Call State Duty Officer
- Call for a FAST team from the Minnesota State Fire Chiefs (through MN State Duty Officer)
- Notify State Fire Marshal (651) 296-7870 or 296-7641.

- First Contact Department Mental Health Consultant and if not available then Arrange for Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (C.I.S.D.) - Metro Region Team (612) 347-5710.
- Submit Minnesota Peace Officer Benefit Form.

[See attachment: Firefighter Line-Of-Duty Death Emergency Checklist.pdf](#)

1052.8 SERIOUSLY INJURED OR HOSPITALIZED EMPLOYEE

I. Some of the notification and support procedures described in this policy for a line-of-duty death may be applied to any instance of an employee who has been seriously injured in the line of duty, except as noted below:

- a. If the seriously injured employee has been taken to a hospital, a Assistant Fire Chief should assign a Captain who is not involved in the incident to go to the hospital and become the hospital liaison.
- b. The Captain should establish communications with the hospital and report regularly to the Assistant Fire Chief on the employee's condition.
- c. A representative of the employee's labor organization will also be sent to the hospital, if possible.

The hospital liaison and labor representative should work cooperatively for the benefit of the employee and his/her family. In addition, the Assistant Fire Chief should ensure close coordination with the treating medical facility.

Other Policies to Reference:

Work-Related Injury and Illness Reporting

Line-Of -Duty Death

Line of Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigation

Family Support Liaison

Line of Duty Death

1051.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide the necessary guidelines and protocol for a line-of-duty death.

The death of any department member while on-duty, while traveling in connection with such duty, or while engaged in firefighting or Emergency Medical Services (EMS) activities off-duty is considered a line-of-duty death. The death of any department

member while undergoing medical treatment for any injury or disease potentially resulting from a job duty may be medically determined to be a line-of-duty death and for purposes of this policy may be handled as a line-of-duty death.

This policy defines and describes the guidelines 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 when a number of department members are seriously injured.

1051.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Burnsville Fire Department to assist and support the family members and coworkers of fallen members to the extent reasonably practicable, while also investigating the cause of death, making appropriate notifications, and fielding press inquiries.

1051.3 RESPONSIBILITIES

1051.3.1 Fire Chief

In the event of being notified of a line-of-duty death, the Fire Chief or the authorized designee should:

- a. Conduct briefings in order to communicate activities to the assigned officers.
- b. Make an announcement to the Department at the appropriate time. Immediately after the announcement, all flags at fire stations and other department facilities should be lowered to half-staff and all badges should be shrouded. Flags should remain at half-staff and badges shrouded for a specified time, but in no event shall they be shrouded for longer than 14 days.
- c. Request that the Administration assemble personal data, such as date of birth, file photograph, marital status, dependents, and names of next of kin, to facilitate the application for state and federal line-of-duty death benefits.
- d. Assign a chief officer to act as the auditing officer to secure the personal effects of the deceased and deliver them to the Administration Division.
- e. Assign a Family Support Liaison to facilitate communication between the deceased member's family and the Department.
- f. Document all actions, contacts, requests, and other pertinent data. This information should be provided to the Fire Chief at regular intervals.
- g. Provide briefing to labor representatives regarding the incident and the deceased member only as is necessary to initiate labor organization benefits and honors.
- h. Preserve any equipment, turnouts, and breathing apparatus used by the deceased firefighter for the investigation.

The Fire Chief should determine if it is necessary to request outside resources to assist in the staffing or investigation of the incident, as needed.

1051.3.2 Captain

In the event of a line-of-duty death, the Captain or the authorized designee shall:

- a. Secure the scene of the incident with the assistance of the Incident Commander, fire prevention personnel, and local law enforcement.
- b. Immediately notify the Assistant Fire Chief and the Fire Chief.
- c. Preserve any equipment, turnouts, and breathing apparatus used by the deceased firefighter for the investigation.
- d. Preserve all tactical worksheets, video, and/or audiotapes for the investigation.
- e. Gather all available information concerning the incident and circumstances leading to the death.
- f. Consider the need for members at the incident to have access to Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) services.

1051.3.3 Public Information SpokespersonPressInformationOfficer]

In the event of a line-of-duty death, the Public Information Spokesperson shall:

- a. Collect facts of the incident from the Captain or the authorized designee and keep in contact to maintain available current information and direction on what information should be released.
- b. Withhold any release of personal information relating to the member's death pending notification of next of kin and until approval is given by the Fire Chief or the authorized designee.
- c. Instruct the involved incident crews that they shall not release any statements to the media or anyone else and should direct any inquiries to the Public Information Spokesperson.
- d. Prepare a written press release.
- e. Ensure that the release of any member medical information complies with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Patient Medical Record Security and Privacy Policy in this manual.

1051.3.4 Administration Division

The Administration Division will have the following responsibilities:

- a. Receive, inventory, and secure the deceased member's personal belongings and hold them until such time as the investigation team approves their release.
- b. Establish the deceased member's survivor benefits (e.g., workers' compensation, life insurance, unused medical leave, retirement benefits, other salary pay, vacation pay).
- c. Review the Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program to determine benefits and the process for securing benefits for surviving next of kin.
- d. Assist and coordinate with the next of kin in the process of securing all the benefits to which the survivor is entitled.

1051.3.5 AUDITING OFFICER

The auditing officer is responsible for ensuring the security and proper disposition of a member's personal effects in the event of a line-of-duty death. Personal effects include all property owned by the deceased member that is kept on department property, as well as personal items carried by the member once those items have been released by investigators, in accordance with the Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigations Policy.

In the event of a member's line-of-duty death, the following steps shall be followed in gathering and disposing of personal effects:

- a. All personal effects at the station shall be taken to the Administration Division to be kept in a secure location.
- b. The deceased member's vehicle will be secured at the work site and the keys forwarded to the Administration Division and secured.
- c. A designee from the Administration Division should conduct an inventory of all personal items received and make a written report.
- d. The next of kin will be given priority consideration to receive the member's property. Care should be exercised in selecting a tactful time for the delivery of personal effects to the next of kin. Documentation is required indicating the date, time, and location of the disposition of the property. The name and the relationship of the individual accepting the property will also be noted. The documentation will be forwarded to the Administration Division for placement in the deceased member's personnel file.

1051.4 FAMILY SUPPORT LIAISON

The appointed Family Support Liaison should conduct all duties in accordance with the Family Support Liaison Policy.

1051.5 FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

Funeral arrangements should be made in accordance with the Funerals Policy.

1051.6 LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH INVESTIGATIONS

For line-of-duty death investigation procedures, see the Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigations Policy.

Other Policies to Reference:

Work-Related Injury and Illness Reporting

Line of Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigation

Line-Of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification

Family Support Liaison

Family Support Liaison

1053.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

 The purpose of this policy is to establish the position, role and responsibilities of the Family Support Liaison. The procedure describes the conditions under which the position is activated and identifies the Department personnel responsible for the activation.

1053.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Burnsville Fire Department to assign a member to act as a Family Support Liaison, as soon as practicable, to the family of any member who has been seriously injured or has died in the line of duty. The member assigned should be the most appropriate person for the circumstances, without regard for rank.

1053.3 PROCEDURE

1053.3.1 LIAISON ACTIVATION CRITERIA

The Department will assign a member to the Family Support Liaison position whenever any department member has been seriously injured or has died in the line of duty. At the discretion of the Fire Chief, the position may be activated and filled in the event of an off-the-job serious injury or death or in the event of a member's catastrophic loss.

1053.3.2 LIAISON ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Family Support Liaison will coordinate the needs and wishes of an employee's family with the responsibilities and needs of the Department and will represent the Department in helping meet the needs of the employee's family by communicating direction with the Fire Chief or the authorized designee. Responsibilities shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Establish ongoing communication with the member's Captain and obtain a briefing regarding circumstances of the event, family contacts up to the present and other relevant information.
- b. Establish contact with family members. Identify immediate needs and questions and provide appropriate solutions or responses. Relay any unfilled needs and unanswered questions to the Fire Chief.
- c. Coordinate or provide transportation to hospitals, places of worship and/or other appropriate locations.
- d. Within 24 hours of an employee's line-of-duty death, arrange for the Fire Chief to visit the family.
- e. Establish contact with the Department Public Information Spokesperson and coordinate media information needs, while considering the privacy wishes of the family.
- f. Coordinate with local law enforcement to provide for the physical security of the family.
- g. Establish communications with other support personnel or groups, including department chaplains, employee associations, human resources representatives and appropriate labor organizations.
- h. ☐ If appropriate, coordinate with the Department-appointed funeral detail officer.
- i. Ensure the family knows how to reach him/her and establish a time to contact the family in the future.

1053.3.3 SELECTION AND REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The affected member's Captain will select the Family Support Liaison. The following guidelines should be used for selection:

- a. The liaison should be an individual the family knows and with whom they are comfortable working.
- b. If the family has no preference, the selection may be made from names recommended by the affected member's supervisor and/or coworkers.
- c. The liaison should report directly to the affected member's Captain.

- d. If the selected liaison does not already have an assigned department pager or cellular telephone, one or both should be assigned to facilitate the necessary communications.

Other Policies to Reference:

Work-Related Injury and Illness Reporting

Line-Of -Duty Death

Line of Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigation

Line-Of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification