

# UW Whitewater Police



## Line of Duty/Work-Related Deaths and Serious Injury

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### I. Purpose

The purpose of this General Order is to define assistance services to be rendered to agency personnel and their families following a serious injury or death while in the performance of work-related duties.

### II. Definitions

**Line of Duty Death:** The death of an active on-duty officer by either felonious or accidental means.

**Employment-Related Injury or Death:** Any serious injury or death while in the performance of work-related duties.

**Next of Kin:** The closest relative of the deceased officer-for example, spouse, significant other, parents, sibling, or children.

**Survivors:** Immediate family members of the deceased officer to include spouse, children, parents, siblings, fiancée, or significant others.

**Serious Injury:** Any injury requiring admission into a medical facility. Injuries not included are those requiring treatment and release from a medical facility.

### III. Policy

It is the policy of the UW-Whitewater Police Department (UWWPD) to provide assistance to the immediate survivors of an active duty officer or agency personnel who dies or is seriously injured in the performance of work-related duties. UWWPD will also provide support to the family during the crisis and afterward.

### IV. Procedure

#### A. Death Notification:

1. Notification of the individual(s) listed on the agency personnel's emergency notification form, followed by those of the next of kin, should be made as soon as possible after the incident.

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2. The name of the deceased agency personnel should not be released to the media until after the notification has been made. If the media already has the name, they will be requested to hold the name until after the notification is made.
3. All notifications, if possible, should be made by two individuals. One member of UWSPD and one support member, such as a family friend, chaplain, etc.
4. Whenever possible, notification should be made by the officer(s) or employees that are listed on the deceased agency personnel's emergency notification form or by a member of the UWSPD Management Team.
5. Every effort should be made to contact the survivor in their private residence or in a place away from other people, such as a back room at their place of employment.
6. Notifying officials should address the survivor(s) in a straightforward manner and use easy-to-understand language to briefly explain the circumstances of the incident and the fact the agency personnel is deceased.
  - a. Officials should not use words such as "passed away" or "no longer with us" in order to avoid using the term "dead".
  - b. Officials should not use police jargon or provide graphic details of the event.
7. Notifying officials should be prepared for unexpected responses from survivors including fainting, hysteria, and verbal/physical abuse.
8. Notifying officials should also consider any physical or medical issues the survivor may have, such as disabilities, elderly, language barriers, visual or hearing impairment, and children's ages. The official should have a plan for any assistance that may be needed in notifying, such as arrangements for childcare or care for the elderly.
9. Survivors should be provided with sufficient time to regain composure following delivery of the death notice. Notifying officials should avoid attempts in the interim to provide comfort.
10. Before leaving, the notifying officials shall provide the family with contact information for the various departmental personnel who will assist them in the coming days, weeks, and months.
11. The notifying official will assist the survivor with making or coordinating other notifications as the survivor and the family request. This may include assisting in contacting other law enforcement agencies to contact people outside of the area.

## **B. Assisting Survivors of Injured or Deceased Agency Personnel at the Hospital:**

1. An officer/supervisor/agency employee will be designated as the hospital liaison to coordinate the arrival of survivors, family, departmental personnel, the media, and others who may respond to the hospital. If at all possible, this person will be someone that the injured/deceased agency personnel have chosen on their emergency notification form.
2. The liaison will arrange for separate facilities and a waiting area for immediate family and the media. If necessary, the liaison will arrange for security at the hospital to keep the two groups separated.

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3. The liaison will avoid making idle promises or false and misleading statements to the family, such as “We’ll retire his/her badge”.
4. The liaison will also assist hospital staff in getting necessary medical information and making sure the billing gets sent to UW-Whitewater instead of the family.
5. The liaison will take all personal effects of the deceased or injured agency personnel so they can be returned to the family at a later time.
6. The liaison will arrange for transportation for the family and other survivors upon their departure from the hospital. These persons should not be left alone if their emotional stability is in question or where other assistance is necessary, such as childcare.

## **C. Appointment of Department Coordination Personnel**

1. Department Liaison: The department liaison officer/personnel shall serve as a facilitator between the family of the injured or deceased agency personnel and UWWPD. This person should be a supervisor in order to expedite the tasks of employing departmental resources and delegation of assignments.
  - a. If requested by the family, providing oversight of travel and lodging arrangements for out-of-town family members.
  - b. If requested by the family, assist with locating a church and reception area to accommodate the law enforcement funeral or funeral.
  - c. If requested by the family, coordinate all official law enforcement arrangements to include Death Watch, Honor Guard, pallbearers, traffic control, and visiting law enforcement.
  - d. Assist University Marketing and Communications (UMC) with information being sent to the media. This will include putting together a departmental bulletin with a summary of the incident, funeral arrangements, etc.
  - e. Make sure the family keeps updated on arrangements, investigations, etc. that UWWPD is involved in. Also, assist with coordinating security checks of the immediate families’ residence if necessary.
  - f. Update UWWPD Personnel with information on the course of the investigation and arrangements.
2. Funeral Liaison/Family Support Advocate: The funeral liaison officer/personnel acts as a facilitator between the deceased agency personnel’s family and the department during the wake and funeral. As Family Support Advocates, they will serve in a long-term liaison and support capacity for the surviving family.
  - a. This position will only be filled if the family is advised of this liaison position and chooses to use it. If possible, this liaison will be filled by someone that the deceased agency personnel had indicated in their emergency notification form.
  - b. This liaison will be available to the family before, during, and after the wake and funeral service.

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- c. The liaison will make sure the wishes and requests of the family come before those of UWWPD.
  - d. Assist the family in making arrangements with the funeral director.
  - e. Assist the family and Department Liaison with out-of-town family, guests, and friends. Also, assist with anyone with special needs at the funeral and wake.
  - f. Briefing the family members on the procedures involved in the law enforcement funeral.
  - g. This liaison will also keep the family abreast of any criminal proceedings in relation to the death of their loved one.
  - h. The liaison will attend criminal proceedings with the family members and explain the court process. They will introduce them to the prosecuting attorney handling the case.
  - i. They will on a regular basis, contact the family to make sure companionship and emotional support are maintained by UWWPD. They will pass any requests of the family member to the appropriate UWWPD staff.
3. Benefits Coordinator
    - a. Will assist the family in filing for insurance claims, UW-Whitewater forms, Federal Public Safety benefits, etc.
    - b. Documenting and directing any inquiries on donations to the family, including charities in lieu of flowers.
    - c. The coordinator will continue to check in with the family to make sure the process does not stall and assist with any questions the family may have.

## **D. Serious On-Duty Injury**

1. Whenever possible, the injured agency personnel should be allowed to make notifications themselves. This can be accomplished via phone if the agency personnel requests, but should be followed up by staff from UWWPD or the law enforcement agency that the officer's family lives in. Arrangements should be made for the family to be taken to the hospital and any other necessary arrangements, such as childcare.
2. The same notification procedure as outlined above in Section A shall be followed.
3. A Department Liaison will be assigned to the family if the agency personnel are going to remain in a medical facility for a long-term stay.

## **E. Support of Coworkers**

The death or serious injury of a coworker in the line of duty or while in the performance of work-related duties can be one of the most traumatic events that a department can experience. Following a line-of-duty death, work-related death, or serious injury, all agency personnel shall be provided the opportunity to participate in psychological or peer support services through the department's employee assistance program and University Health and Counseling Services.