



LINE OF DUTY DEATH

SCOPE

This guideline shall apply to all members of the Stoney Point Fire Department and shall be adhered to by all members.

PURPOSE

To establish the responsibilities and procedures involved following a Line of Duty Death within Stoney Point Fire Department.

DEFINITIONS

Guideline - a general rule, principle, outline of a policy

Line of Duty Death – (LODD) any emergency services personnel who has died as the direct and proximate result of a personal injury sustained in the line of duty (trauma, cancer, heart attack, etc.)

Member – any career, volunteer, staff, and auxiliary personnel affiliated with the department

Public Information Officer – agency communications coordinator and spokesperson

Responsibility - the state or fact of having a duty to deal with something or of having control over someone, being accountable for one's actions

Shall - indicates a mandatory requirement

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 1 of 8

GUIDELINES

A Line of Duty Death is a tragedy, not only for the Firefighter involved, but for their family and the department. There are many responsibilities for the department to ensure that the family is taken care of, and that a thorough investigation is accomplished to identify problems that need to be addressed. The procedures and responsibilities provided in this guideline are flexible and designed to be expandable should the need arise in the event of multiple line of duty fatalities. It is important for all members involved with the notification, public information, funeral preparations, and the investigation remain professional, respectful, and compassionate throughout their assignments.

Assigned Responsibilities

Chief Officers, Company Officers and other members of Stoney Point Fire Department shall be assigned the listed responsibilities following any Line of Duty Death. Daily briefings shall be held with all assigned members and the Fire Chief to ensure that all responsibilities are being achieved.



Duty Chief's Responsibilities

In the event of a line of duty death, the on-duty Chief Officer shall:

- Notify the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief, and off duty Assistant Fire Chiefs
- Notify Fayetteville Police Department, or Cumberland County Sheriff's Office
- Secure the scene of the incident with the assistance of Law Enforcement personnel
- Direct all department personnel and 911 Dispatch Center to withhold release of personal data relating to the members death, pending notification of next of kin
- Gather all information concerning the incident and circumstances leading to the death
- Notify the Stoney Point Fire Department Administrative Assistant to assemble as much personal data as possible concerning the deceased member.
 - name
 - date of birth
 - file photo
 - marital status
 - dependents names, and addresses of next of kin
 - certifications and training records
- Assign another Chief Officer/Station Captain, as soon as possible, to secure the personal effects of the deceased, inventory and deliver them to the Administrative Assistant
- Assign a Hospital Liaison Officer(s) to go to Cape Fear Valley or other hospital(s) where the deceased or injured Firefighters are sent
- Coordinate to have additional Firefighters relieve the crews on scene
- Preserve any equipment, turnouts and SCBA used by injured or deceased firefighters for the investigation
- Preserve all tactical worksheets, video and/or audio tapes for the investigation

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 2 of 8

Hospital Liaison Officer Responsibilities

Reports directly to the receiving hospital(s) to establish and maintain a liaison with the hospital staff, PIOs, the Fire Chief, the Incident Commander and on call Duty Chief. The Hospital Liaison Officer shall:

- Keep the Fire Chief and Incident Commander informed of significant information relating to the patient's condition
- Ensure that no press releases are made
- Collect all personal articles of the Firefighter from hospital staff, should pronouncement of his/her death occur
- Advise the hospital staff or the Medical Examiners staff that an autopsy is required and that blood gases are required to be drawn as soon as possible



*Note: Refer to *U.S. Department of Justice-Line of Duty Death* concerning disposition of blood gases. For a firefighter's surviving dependents to receive the Federal Public Safety Officer's Benefit, certain tests must be made before death, or at the time of death.

It is necessary to obtain a complete blood toxicology report primarily concerning blood alcohol and Carbon Monoxide levels for **ANY** death, even those involving a non-traumatic injury, such as a heart attack. A copy of the autopsy, or affidavit detailing why one was not performed, must be provided.

Public Information Officer Responsibilities

The Fire Chief shall assign an Officer to perform the responsibilities of Public Information Officer as soon as possible following the incident. The Public Information Officer shall:

- Gather all available facts of the incident as it occurred
- Contact Cumberland County or Fayetteville Dispatch (**Do not use the radio**)
 - Update them in on the situation
 - Inform them of your assignment as PIO and remind them to not release any statements regarding the incident
 - Advise them they will be receiving a written news release as soon as next of kin have been notified
- Collect all relevant personal information on the victim(s)
- Maintain contact with Hospital Liaison Officer(s) on status of injured firefighter(s)
- Provide the Fire Chief or the assigned Notification Officer with the required information prior to their contacting the next of kin
- Prepare a written press release (see example below)
- Refrain from issuing any public information release until after the next of kin notification and upon approval by the Fire Chief
- Answer media requests with an approved press statement

Public Information Release Example

The following is an example of an initial press release concerning a Line of Duty Death: *"The Fire Chief (name) regrets to announce the death of (rank), (name) who died in the line of duty."* A brief description of the circumstances will follow.

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 3 of 8



Notification Officer Responsibilities

The notification of the next of kin for all Line of Duty Deaths and serious injuries of Stoney Point Fire Department personnel shall be made by the Fire Chief or a designated representative in the Fire Chief's absence. It is of the utmost importance to conduct the notification in a prompt, professional and respectful manner. Other Officer(s) including the Stoney Point Fire Department Chaplain may be assigned to assist with notification. All notifications shall be conducted in person, whenever possible. The 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 or serious injury. This official notification shall be made before the release of any details are made to the news media. The Notification Officer shall:

- Wear department uniform (if time permits) and have official Stoney Point Fire Department ID Card in their possession
- Assign an additional uniformed Stoney Point Fire Department member to accompany them
- Review the **factual** circumstances of the incident with the Public Information Officer
- Review the personal data concerning the deceased with the Administrative Assistant before making the notification
- Be prepared to assist the next of kin with the immediate emotional trauma associated with the notification
- Be prepared to remain with the next of kin until a family member or friend arrives, or for as long as requested
- Identify whether the family has a specific person, such as a close family member and/or department member, to act as Family Liaison Officer
- Inform the Fire Chief and the chain of command, Incident Commander, and the Public Information Officer that the notification has been completed

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 4 of 8

Family Liaison Officer

The Fire Chief shall appoint a Family Liaison Officer(s) to work in conjunction with the family to provide a liaison between the family and Stoney Point Fire Department. In incidents involving multiple deaths, more than one Family Liaison Officer shall be assigned. The Family Liaison Officer shall serve as a logistical contact and communications link with and reports directly to the Fire Chief or representative. The Notification Officer may be appointed to serve as the Family Liaison Officer to provide continuity and familiarity to the family. As a direct representative of the Fire Chief, the Family Liaison Officer shall receive the full cooperation of Stoney Point Fire Department personnel. The principle concern of the Family Liaison Officer is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. The Family Liaison 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 all cases, the level of Fire Department participation with the funeral arrangements will be at the discretion of the surviving family.

Period of Morning

Immediately following the public announcement of a Line of Duty Death, the flags at both stations shall be lowered to half-staff and remain at half-staff until the day following the funeral. All badges will be shrouded and worn for thirty days following the funeral. The primary entrance doors at both stations will be shrouded with a black drape for 30 days following the funeral. The marquee signs at both stations shall be utilized to provide information and remembrance of the fallen Firefighter(s).

Emergency Notification Information

The Stoney Point Fire Department Individual Fact Sheet Form is a confidential record, completed by all members. The form provides the department with emergency contact information for accidents involving a member of Stoney Point Fire Department. Each member shall complete this form at the time of original employment/membership with the Stoney Point Fire Department. Updates to the information shall be made at any time through the Administrative Assistant and reviewed annually for relevance.

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 5 of 8

Line of Duty Death Investigation

As soon as possible following a line of duty death, the Fire Chief shall assign an Investigation Team to investigate the circumstances of the event. The objective of this team shall be to analyze and document the events leading to the Line of Duty Death. Additionally, the team shall make recommendations designed to prevent similar occurrences in the future. This team will cooperate with the team assigned by the Office of the State Fire Marshal and any law enforcement agencies team as assigned. The Stoney Point Fire Department Investigation Team shall be led by a Chief Officer. The on-call Duty Chief at the time of the incident shall not be assigned to the Investigation Team as a Team Leader. This procedure may also be utilized in the event of a serious accident involving Stoney Point Fire Department personnel that may or may not have resulted in death or injuries. The principal goal of the Investigation Team shall be to identify the factors pertaining to the incident and to recommend actions that would prevent or reduce the risk of a similar event. A secondary objective shall be to obtain, document and secure evidence, which may be a factor in any regulatory actions or litigation resulting from the incident.



The Investigation Team shall report to the Fire Chief through the Team Leader who is responsible for the management of the process. The Investigative Team shall include as many personnel as may be required by the specific circumstances of the event. All members of Stoney Point Fire Department shall give their full and complete cooperation to the Investigation Team. The duties and responsibilities of the Investigation Team shall include:

- Gather, label, examine, and analyze all physical evidence related to the incident
 - equipment or apparatus utilized by the deceased
 - personal protective equipment utilized by the deceased
- Written interview summaries of all witnesses with direct or indirect knowledge of the circumstances
- Document the incident
 - radio traffic recordings, Computer Aided Dispatch transcripts
 - witness statements (recorded and/or transcribed), investigators' notes
 - photograph the incident scene, equipment, gear, apparatus, etc.
 - any film, video, or digital recordings
 - operational sketch of the incident
- Consultation with persons having special knowledge of the factors involved in the incident, including experts and consultants from the private sector
- Review relevant standard operating guidelines and procedures, determine the effect on the incident and the observance of procedure
- Liaison with other agencies involved in investigation of the incident
- Development of a full written report on the incident, including conclusions and recommendations
- Liaison with department's attorney and Personnel Officer
- Coordinate activities with Fire Investigations to prevent interference in any criminal investigations related to the incident

It is the policy of Stoney Point Fire Department to cooperate with other governmental agencies having legal cause to be involved in the investigation of a Line of Duty Death. Furthermore, the department shall cooperate with fire service organizations to aid in occupational safety and health, health education and training. These agencies include:

- NC Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM)
- United States Fire Administration
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
- Local/State Law Enforcement Agencies
- NC Department of Labor
- Cumberland County Fire Marshal's Office

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 6 of 8



Programs

Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)

The participation of these agencies shall be at their own discretion, depending on the circumstances of the incident. These agencies may or may not produce their own reports concerning the incident with recommendations or corrective actions. These reports do not supersede or substitute for the Investigation Team Report.

The Investigation Team shall utilize the resources of individuals and agencies outside the Fire Department to assist in the investigation and/or provide technical consultation when necessary. These resources include:

- National Fire Protection Association
- NC Firemen's Association
- NC Association of Fire Chief's
- NC State Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab
- Consultants

The Investigation Team report shall remain separate and distinct from any Fire Cause Investigation. A copy of the Fire Investigation report should be included in the final report package. The Investigation Team report and all related documentation shall be an internal Fire Department administrative report.

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 7 of 8

Requirements

To qualify for the Federal Public Safety Officer's Benefit Act there are certain requirements that must be fulfilled. Stoney Point Fire Department's representatives shall ensure that these requirements are accomplished. Among these requirements are:

- Obtain a complete blood toxicology report
 - blood alcohol
 - carbon monoxide
 - illicit substances
- Obtain a copy of the completed autopsy report (or affidavit)



Programs

Standard Operating Guidelines (SOG)

Notification List

Immediately following a Line of Duty Death there are several notifications that must be made following the notification of the next of kin. These notifications are:

- US Fire Administration and National Fire Academy to lower the US Flag at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial
 - USFA 1-301-447-1272 (8:30 – 5:00 EST Monday – Friday)
 - NFA 1-301-447-1123 (8:30 – 5:00 EST Monday – Friday)
 - NFA Security Office 1-301-447-1000 (after working hours)
 - <https://apps.usfa.fema.gov/firefighter-fatalities/fatalityData/notification1>
- US Department of Justice 1-888-744-6513 or 1- 202-307-0635 (8:30-5:00 EST)
 - Deceased name, occupation, and title
 - Next of kin's name
 - Names and DOB of any children
 - Next of kin's mailing address
 - Fire Chief's Name
 - Name and address of contact person
 - Description of incident

References

Funeral Procedures for Firefighters

Public Safety Officer's Benefits

34 USC Chapter 101

Public Safety Officers' Benefits: Death Benefits Program

Policy Number

7A.035

Page 8 of 8