

Florida
Division of Forestry

*On-the-Job Fatality
& Serious Injury Policy*

Chapter 110.000

DIVISION OF FORESTRY ON-THE-JOB FATALITY & SERIOUS INJURY POLICY

I. PURPOSE

This policy is designed to prepare the Division of Forestry for the event of an employee's or volunteer's death or serious injury in the line of duty and to direct the Division in providing proper support for the deceased or injured employee's family.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Division of Forestry to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of an employee or volunteer who dies or is seriously injured in the line of duty and to provide tangible and emotional support during this traumatic period of readjustment for the surviving family and employees.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. *In-the-Line-of-Duty Death*: The death of an employee (full, part-time or OPS) or volunteer by felonious or accidental means during the course of performing Division of Forestry functions while on duty. This also includes off-duty firefighting and EMS activities. **NOTE:** Contact the Department's Bureau of Personnel Benefits Office for full information on benefit eligibility on Line-of-Duty Death Benefits.

B. *Serious Injury*: Any traumatic physical or emotional injury sustained while performing on-the-job functions

C. *Survivors*: Immediate family members of the deceased/injured employee/volunteer to include spouse, children, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, siblings, fiancée and/or significant others.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. Death Notification

The following procedures should be adhered to in the case of in-the-line-of-duty deaths and in the case of critically injured employees/volunteers with a poor prognosis of survival. These procedures should be followed whenever possible with the understanding that the wishes of the family take precedence over the desires of the agency. Employees providing services and assistance to family members and survivors will take all possible measures to accommodate their needs, wishes and desires, but should not make promises to family members that they are not sure can be met. **NOTE:** Remember that securing the scene of the incident, contacting the State OIC, law enforcement and other appropriate agency(ies) is a primary responsibility of the

Incident IC.

1. The name of the deceased/injured employee/volunteer will not be released to the media or other parties before immediate survivors are notified. This process may be delayed or more difficult if immediate next of kin or survivors do not reside in the immediate area, e.g., out-of-state.
2. The unit manager or local OIC (Officer-in-Charge) will designate a supervisor to inform the immediate family of the employee's/volunteer's condition or death. If not immediately available, the supervisor will make an appointment.
3. Notification of the immediate family should be made as soon as possible by the local unit manager or local OIC and simultaneously notifying the State OIC.
(State OIC # 1-877-353-7374 Pin# 274-1638).
4. The State OIC shall notify the division director or his/her designee as soon as possible to notify the Commissioner's Office so that it may then notify the Governor's Office.
5. The State OIC should also contact the *State Warning Point* after the immediate family has been notified. **(State EOC # 1-800-320-0519 or (850) 413-9900).**
6. Notification of survivors in the immediate area will be made in person and, whenever appropriate, with another person such as a member of the family's clergy. Whenever the health of immediate survivors is concerned, emergency medical services personnel will be requested to stand by.
7. If the opportunity to get the family to the hospital exists prior to the individual's death, notification personnel will inform the hospital liaison officer that the family is on the way. In such cases, immediate transportation should be arranged for the survivors rather than waiting for any other members of the agency's delegation to arrive. If the individual has died, notification should be made to the survivors in as forthright and empathic a manner as possible.

NOTE: DMS policy normally prohibits non-governmental citizens from traveling in our vehicles.

8. Communication of information concerning the employee/volunteer and the incident will, whenever possible, be restricted to hard line telephones to avoid interception by the media and others. Should the media obtain the individual's name prematurely, the ranking manager/supervisor should request that the information be withheld until proper notification of survivors can be made.
9. The notification supervisor will be responsible for the identification of additional survivors outside the area and will make any notifications as desired by the immediate

family. Such notifications will be made by contacting the forestry field unit in that area and requesting that a personal notification be made using the above as a guide.

10. The notification supervisor will submit a written report to the unit manager specifying the identity, time and place survivors were notified.

B. Assisting Survivors at the Hospital

Whenever possible, the Division Director or his representative, will join the family at the hospital in order to emphasize the agency's support. The next highest ranking employee to arrive at the hospital will serve as or designate a hospital liaison officer (e.g., Deputy Chief, Field Operations) who will be responsible for coordinating the arrival of immediate survivors, departmental personnel, the media and others and assume the following responsibilities:

1. Arrange for waiting facilities for immediate family and survivors and a press staging area. The desires of the surviving family members should be followed with regard to their accessibility to other employees, friends and the media. Press staging area should be set up where it does not interfere with hospital operations and/or add a burden to the family. **NOTE:** Inquire if hospital has a media relations person (and policy) for support/guidance.
2. Ensure that medical personnel provide pertinent medical information on the employee's/volunteer's condition to the family before any other parties.
3. Assist family members, in accordance with their desires, in gaining access to the injured or deceased employee/volunteer.
4. Provide hospital personnel with all necessary information on billing for medical services. The liaison officer should ensure that all medical bills are directed to the appropriate departmental authority and that they are not forwarded to the employee's family or other survivors.
5. Arrange transportation for the family and other survivors upon their departure from the hospital.
6. Ensure that immediate family members are provided with appropriate assistance at the hospital.

C. Appointment of Division Coordination Personnel

The designated division/department employees will begin serving in the following capacities: division liaison, funeral liaison and benefits coordinator. These assignments may be made in writing and the surviving family members notified. In addition, the field unit manager (or Bureau Chief, Field Operations) will

1. Ensure that the employee assistance program has been contacted to assist surviving family members and emphasize the family's right to psychological services; and
2. Ensure that other employees/volunteers are provided with the opportunity to participate in critical incident stress debriefings (CISD).

D. Division Liaison

The division liaison officer will serve as a facilitator between the family and the agency. Assistant liaison officers may be appointed as necessary. This individual will normally be from management to expedite the tasks of employing divisional resources and the delegation of assignments. This person will work closely with the funeral liaison officer to ensure the needs and requests of the family are fulfilled. This includes but is not necessarily limited to, the following:

1. Providing oversight of traveling and lodging arrangements for out-of-town family members and/or employees.
2. If needed or requested, assist family in identifying alternative houses of worship and reception halls that will accommodate the funeral. These alternatives will be presented to the family, who will make the final determination.
3. Coordinating all official fire and emergency services agency notifications and arrangements to include honor guard, pallbearers, traffic control and liaison with visiting fire, emergency services and forestry/land management agencies.
4. Assist family members in dealing with the general media inquiries and informing them of limitations on what they can say to the media.
5. Provide liaison with the media to include coordination of any statements and press conferences. The liaison should also ensure that members of the agency are aware of the restrictions regarding the release of any information that might undermine future legal proceedings.
6. Ensure that security checks of the survivor's and dead/injured residences are initiated immediately following the incident and are continued as long as necessary.

E. Funeral Liaison

The funeral liaison officer acts as a facilitator between the decedent's family and the agency during the wake and the funeral. The funeral liaison officer is responsible for

1. Meeting with family members and explaining liaison's responsibilities to them

2. Being available to the family prior to and throughout the wake and the funeral
3. Ensuring the needs and wishes of the family comes before those of the agency
4. Assisting the family in working with the funeral director regarding the funeral
5. Relaying any information to the family concerning the circumstances of the decedent's death and appropriate information regarding any investigation
6. Determining the need for travel arrangements for out-of-town family members and any other special needs of the family during the funeral and reporting this to the division liaison
7. Briefing the family members on the procedures involved in the firefighting/emergency services funeral

F. Benefits Coordinator

This responsibility will be handled by the Department's Benefits Office. This office should be contacted within the first 24 hours or on the first work day after the event to initiate paperwork and benefits process. This office will also have the latest information available. All materials regarding compensation claims and related paperwork, survivor benefits including state life insurance, Public Safety Officers' Benefit Act(PSOB), etc. should be handled by this office. This person can also coordinate any additional long-term support that may be available to the family. **(Contact DACS Bureau of Personnel Management Benefit Office @ 850-921-6269 or SC 291-6269).**

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