

A Resource Guide

For Handling Firefighter Line-of-Duty Deaths



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Foreword

Congress created the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to lead a nationwide effort to honor America's fallen firefighters. Since 1992, the non-profit Foundation has developed and expanded programs that fulfill that mandate. The Foundation's mission is to honor and remember America's fallen fire heroes and to provide resources to assist their survivors in rebuilding their lives.

To achieve its mission, the Foundation:

- sponsors the annual National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend;
- helps survivors attend the Weekend by providing assistance with travel, lodging and meals;
- awards scholarships to eligible spouses, children, and stepchildren;
- offers ongoing support programs for survivors;
- helps departments deal with line-of-duty deaths and serious injuries;
- is creating the first permanent National Memorial Park honoring all fallen firefighters; and
- leads national initiatives to prevent line-of-duty deaths and injuries.

This Resource Guide is a compilation of key materials from our training program, *Taking Care of Our Own*®. The Foundation developed this daylong course to help fire chiefs and departments better prepare for the tragedy of a line-of-duty death or life-threatening injury. By being prepared, departments can better support families and coworkers.

Please visit the Foundation's Web site at www.firehero.org for information on course offerings and locations. You can also download many of the course materials and find the newest Web site resources.

The Foundation thanks the Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, Department of Justice, for its support which has made these resources possible.

The Foundation hopes this Resource Guide will help fire service personnel who need information to develop or expand policies and procedures. We hope you never have to use them.

Be safe so "Everyone Goes Home."





www.firehero.org

*The Official Web Site of the
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation*

The Foundation's Web site offers many resources to help departments and survivors. Many of the resources can be downloaded so you can customize them. Here is a site map of what you can find at www.firehero.org.

Taking Care of Our Own® Training

- Detailed information on the *Taking Care of Our Own®* training class
- Resources and support for forming state and regional line-of-duty death response teams
- Resources to help departments create line-of-duty death procedures
- Online forms to request information and support

Benefits

- Comprehensive listing of survivor benefits by state
- Information on federal benefits for fire service survivors
- Information on benefits for survivors of federal firefighters
- Scholarship programs and information about other educational assistance

Handling Line-of-Duty Deaths

- Resources to help departments immediately after the death of a firefighter
- Information about the Public Safety Officers' Benefits program
- Downloadable funeral guide
- Criteria for inclusion on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial





Fallen Heroes

- Searchable database of fallen fire heroes honored at the National Memorial
- Personal tribute pages created by families and friends
- Examples of how families, departments, and communities have honored fallen firefighters
- Comprehensive list of state memorials honoring fallen firefighters

Family Programs

- Information on support programs for families
- Specialized grief brochures and recent issues of our newsletters
- A lending library of materials dealing with grief and loss
- Links to other resources and organizations
- Online forms to request information and support

Fire Service Programs

- National initiatives to prevent firefighter line-of-duty deaths
- Ways for members of the fire service to be involved with the Foundation's programs

Walk of Honor

- Searchable database of inscribed bricks on the Walk of Honor
- Images and information about the National Memorial Park

Memorial Weekend

- Detailed information on this annual national event
- Information on how family members, friends, and members of the fire service can participate



Table of Contents

Foreword.....	i
www.firehero.org	ii
Lists detailed information available through the Foundation’s web site.	
Section One: Pre-incident Planning	1
Focuses on the importance of planning, guidelines for creating your own plan and suggestions for helping families access death benefits.	
Planning Considerations for a Line-of-Duty Death.....	2
Employee Emergency Contact Information	8
Financial Benefits Checklist	11
National Scholarship Programs	13
Section Two: Notification	14
Covers the proper way to handle notification of families after a serious injury or death.	
Five Principles of Notification	15
“What To Say and Not Say” Card	Insert
Section Three: Family Support	17
Suggests ways to support survivors from the time of the incident until after the funeral; presents information on grief.	
How to Help the Family.....	18
Signs of Grief.....	21
Section Four: Department Support	22
Contains information to help a department through the difficult time after a loss of a firefighter.	
Steps to Take Immediately	23
Line-of-Duty Death Action Checklist	25
Chief-to-Chief Network.....	29
Preparing a Eulogy	30



Section One

Pre-Incident Planning



Planning Considerations for a Line-of-Duty Death

(online at www.firehero.org)

The Foundation has compiled elements from several plans that address line-of-duty death procedures. These sample elements reflect how various departments have prepared to deal with the tragedy of a line-of-duty death. These are by no means the only things that can be done. These elements can help you establish the basis for a plan for your department.

Basic Plan Elements

Sample Elements from Existing Department Plans

1. Policy

A. It will be the responsibility of (department name) to provide assistance to immediate survivors

OR

B. This plan recognizes that the goal of (department name) is to help people and provide assistance at every opportunity. This includes assisting the department's fire service family, especially when a member suffers a serious injury or dies in the line of duty.

2. Purpose

A. The purpose of this policy is to direct (department name) to provide proper care for the deceased firefighter's family. The FAMILY should make all decisions regarding funeral arrangements, with their wishes taking precedence over those of the department.

OR

B. The purpose of this policy is to offer assistance to all members of the department's fire service family after a line-of-duty death. This policy will help the department prepare for and respond to circumstances in a professional and compassionate manner.

3. Definitions

A. Line-of-duty death: A death which is the direct result of taking any reasonable or emergency response action that an active firefighter is authorized or obligated to perform. This includes agency prescribed training.

B. Survivors: Immediate family members including: spouses; all children, including stepchildren and legally-adopted children; parents; siblings; and significant others. It should also include close friends.

C. Benefits: Financial payments, scholarships, tax benefits, and special programs available to the immediate next-of-kin of the fallen firefighter.

You may want to add other definitions based on the specificity of the plan.





Procedural Components

1. Establishing a Family Support Team

Sample Statements

The department's Family Support Team will be responsible for necessary functions before, during, and after the funeral. The Chief will activate the team as needed, based on department resources. Members of the team will handle the following responsibilities:

1. Liaison between the team and the chief
2. Overall coordination of the team
3. Hospital liaison to relay information between medical personnel and the family
4. Family liaison to provide personal support for the immediate family, usually at the home. Personal support includes duties such as screening calls and visits, providing local transportation, assisting with burial arrangements, etc.
5. Media coordination to release information about the incident, arrange media coverage of the funeral or memorial service, and provide privacy to the family
6. Benefits coordination; only one department member should be authorized to work with the family on survivor benefits
7. Transportation and lodging coordination for out-of-town family members
8. Funeral or memorial service coordination including services and burial arrangements, traffic, honor guard, etc.

2. Notifying Survivors

The department will establish a notification policy for survivors of fallen firefighters. This will include the following elements:

1. Getting all department members to provide emergency contact information and updating the information annually. This will allow members to name a member of the department who should be part of the notification team.
2. Designating senior department personnel, and backups, who will make the notification.
3. Notifying immediate family members in person before release of any information to anyone else. If family members live out of the area, make arrangements for in-person notification by the local department.
4. Having two members of the department make the notification. Don't hold up notification if the designated department members are not readily available.





Procedural Components

Sample Statements

3. Notifying Members of the Department

5. If needed, driving family members to the hospital in a department vehicle and getting them to the proper area. If the family wants to drive their own car, have a member of the department accompany them.

Once the family has been notified, members of the department should learn of the incident from the department before they hear about it through the media. The department will establish procedures to ensure this notification, including:

1. Notifying all on- and off-duty chief officers
2. Notifying all chaplains
3. Preparing a short summary of known facts about the incident and the deceased and/or critically injured for the Chief and all other spokespersons to use
4. Working with the personnel officer, to confirm the basic information about the firefighter(s), including:
 - Correct spelling of name
 - Age
 - Next of kin
5. Preparing a memo to all members of the department that includes confirmed information
6. Establishing procedures to notify off-duty members
7. Keeping all members informed of funeral arrangements and memorial services

4. Notifying Others

Other members of the community need to be notified after the family and the members of the department. Each community will need to tailor this list to its unique circumstances.

However, the plan should include the following elements:

1. Making sure a short summary of known facts about the incident and the deceased and/or critically injured is available for the Chief and all other spokespersons to use
2. Establishing a priority checklist of whom to call, including name and title, office and home contact information, etc.

For example:

1. Elected officials
2. Employee Association official
3. Safety Officer
4. Public Safety Officers' Benefits staff
5. Fire service organizations





Procedural Components

Sample Statements

5. Working with the Media

The department should take steps to ensure notification of the family before giving any information to the media. Procedures to follow include:

1. Giving no personal information out to the media, even if they are on the scene, until confirmation that family notification has occurred
2. Using the basic information gathered on the incident and the deceased and/or critically injured. (Refer to Component 3 - *Notifying Members of the Department*)
3. Preparing and clearing a written statement for the Chief to deliver or release
4. Setting up a media briefing, either at the hospital or other location
5. Designating a department backup to handle coverage of the incident if it is still ongoing so the primary PIO can concentrate on handling information on the fatality

6. Dealing with the Hospital

The critically-injured firefighter will be transported to a local hospital. The department will establish procedures to deal with local hospitals. This will include the following elements:

1. Meeting with hospital officials to discuss appropriate waiting areas for family, coworkers, and the media should a line-of-duty death occur
2. Using EMS personnel who know hospital personnel and procedures as a resource
3. Ensuring that the hospital information liaison has access to medical personnel to obtain information for the family and to provide approved information to the media coordinator
4. Having a member of the department available to the family at all times to assist them and ensure their privacy
5. Assigning a member of the department to ensure collection of the deceased's personal property
6. Arranging transportation for the family back to their residence

If the critically-injured firefighter must be transported to a medical center out of the local area, the department will establish procedures to assist the family in that location. These include:





Procedural Components

Sample Statements

7. Establishing a Community Response Network

1. Helping arrange transportation for the firefighter and the family, as required
2. Contacting fire department officials in that area and arranging support for the family

The department will set up a community response network that can be activated if a tragedy occurs. This would include:

1. Working with the Highway Patrol on providing or escorting family members from out of town
2. Contacting local funeral homes to determine if they defer funeral costs and offer burial plots for line-of-duty deaths of public safety officers
3. Working with local hotels, motels and restaurants to provide lodging and meals for families attending the funeral
4. Finding childcare providers to assist families with small children during this period
5. Identifying local banks that will provide services to the family for handling donations and other financial transactions

8. Assisting the Family Before and During the Funeral

The department will ensure that the family's wishes come first. The department will establish procedures, including:

1. Meeting with the family to explain what support the department can offer
2. Giving the family a pager or cell phone number where a fire service liaison can be reached at any time
3. Providing information on different options for funeral arrangements, including a full honors fire service funeral
4. If the family chooses to have a fire service funeral, working with them on details
5. If the family chooses to have a private service, working with them as requested
6. Requesting local law enforcement officials to make routine checks on the family's residence for several weeks
7. Assisting with household responsibilities such as running errands, mowing the lawn, answering the phone, etc.



Procedural Components

Sample Statements

9. Providing Benefit Information to the Family

The department will maintain an up-to-date list of death benefits available to survivors. The department will establish procedures on assisting the family, including:

1. Assigning a benefits coordinator to handle all contact with survivors. The coordinator will help the survivors access and process required paperwork.
2. Providing a list of financial planners and legal advisors whom the survivors may want to contact

10. Assisting the Family After the Funeral

The department will maintain contact with the family and establish procedures to ensure ongoing support, including:

1. Continuing to invite the family to department events
2. Ensuring all death benefits have been processed
3. Offering assistance with household maintenance, yard work, etc. as appropriate
4. Calling or checking in on a regular basis
5. Considering the establishment of a permanent tribute such as scholarship, dedication of a facility, etc.
6. Referring the family to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for information on its Fire Service Survivors Network
7. Helping the family attend national and state memorial services
8. Staying part of major events such as graduations, weddings, etc.





Employee Emergency Contact Information

(online at www.firehero.org)

The information that you provide will be used **ONLY** in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill it out fully and accurately because the data will help the department take care of your family and friends.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Home Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone Number		
()		

CONTACT INFORMATION

Family or friends you would like the department to contact. Please list in the order you want them contacted. If needed, provide additional names on the back of this sheet.

NOTE: If the contact is a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult to contact.

Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address
Phone
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer
Address
Phone
Pager/Cell phone
Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for an interpreter





Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address
Phone
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer
Address
Phone
Pager/Cell phone
Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for an interpreter

List names and dates of birth of all of your children (<i>attach additional names</i>)	
Name	DOB
Name	DOB
Name	DOB

List the department member(s) you would like to accompany a senior fire officer to make the notification
Name
Name

List anyone else you want to help make the notification, for example, your minister.
Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address
Phone
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer
Address
Phone
Pager/Cell phone





OTHER INFORMATION

Make sure someone close to you knows this information.

Religion:
 Place of Worship:
 Address:

Funeral Preferences
 Are you a veteran of the U. S. Armed Services? yes no
 If you are entitled to a military funeral, do you wish to have one? yes no
 Do you wish to have a fire service funeral? yes no

List your membership in fire service, religious, or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family:

Do you have a will? yes no
If yes, where is it located and/or who should be contacted about it? _____

List any insurance policies you have:

<u>Company</u>	<u>Policy Number</u>	<u>Location of Policy</u>

Is beneficiary information current? This may determine who gets Federal benefits.

Special Requests:
 If you are an organ donor, coordination with medical officials will be necessary.
 List any other requests here.



Financial Benefits Checklist

(online at www.firehero.org)

Consider each of the following benefits. Are families of your department members eligible to receive them? If so, do you know how to access the benefits?

If you are unsure what's available in your state, go to www.firehero.org and check the state benefits section.

Source of Benefit	Are these benefits available to your firefighters?			Notes/Action Needed
	Yes	No	Need More Info	
Federal				
Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program				
Public Safety Officers' Education Assistance Program				
Social Security				
Veterans' Benefits				
State				
One-time Death Benefit				
Health Insurance				
Workers' Compensation				
Funeral Benefits				
Retirement/Pension Plan				
Education Benefit for Children				
Education Benefit for Spouses				





Local Government

Health Insurance				
Life Insurance				
Education Benefits for Children				
Education Benefits for Spouses				
Employee Assistance Program				
Retirement/Pension Plan				
Final Paycheck				
Non-Profit				
Education Benefits for Children				
Education Benefits for Spouses				
Booster Club, 100 Club, Heroes, Blue Coats, etc.				





National Scholarship Programs

National Fallen Firefighters Foundation

The Foundation offers financial assistance for post-secondary education and training to spouses, children, and stepchildren of firefighters honored at the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial. Children and stepchildren must currently be under age 30 or have been under age 22 at the time of the firefighter's death.

Survivors who apply for the Foundation's Sarbanes Scholarship Program will also be considered for several partner programs. You only need to submit the Foundation scholarship application package to be considered for the partner programs.

You may also be eligible for educational assistance through your state or other national programs. The Foundation's Web site includes a state-by-state listing of benefits.

For an application and detailed information about the program, visit www.firehero.org or contact the Foundation at firehero@firehero.org or (301) 447-1365. The application deadline is April 1.

Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance Program *U. S. Department of Justice*

This program provides support for higher education expenses through an established monthly allowance for eligible survivors. This Department of Justice assistance program is limited to survivors who qualified for Public Safety Officers' Benefits. The program now covers eligible survivors of federal, state, and local emergency services personnel killed in the line of duty since January 1, 1978. For more information, contact the Bureau of Justice Assistance at (888) 744-6513.

W. H. McClennan Scholarship *International Association of Fire Fighters*

The IAFF awards annual scholarships to children of firefighters who died in the line of duty. The applicant's parent must have been a member in good standing of the International Association of Fire Fighters at the time of death. For more information, contact:

Office of the General President
International Association of Fire Fighters
1750 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20006-5395
(202) 737-8484



Section Two

Notification



Five Principles of Notification

In Person

- Always do the notification in person, never by phone!
- For family members living out of the local area, arrange for authorities in that area to make the notification in person.
- Immediately find the firefighter's emergency contact information to know who needs to be notified in person. Usually, the spouse (or unmarried partner) and parents of the firefighter should be the first priority.

In Time and with Certainty

- Before making notification, have positive identification of the deceased firefighter. Obviously, errors in identity can cause extreme trauma.
- Never discuss a fatality over the radio. This may result in a family member receiving the news before you can notify them in person.
- Quickly gather as much information about the incident as possible before making the notification. Survivors will have questions.
- Get to the survivors quickly. Don't let the media notify them first.

In Pairs

- Have two people present to make the notification. Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions when they learn of the death.
- Use the employee's emergency contact information to identify a uniformed member of the fire service to accompany the department's representative. It is helpful to have the department chaplain or a friend of the firefighter's family, too.
- Take two vehicles, if possible. This will allow one of you to take a survivor to the hospital, if necessary, while the second person stays with other survivors.
- Before you arrive, decide who will speak and what that person will say.

In Plain Language

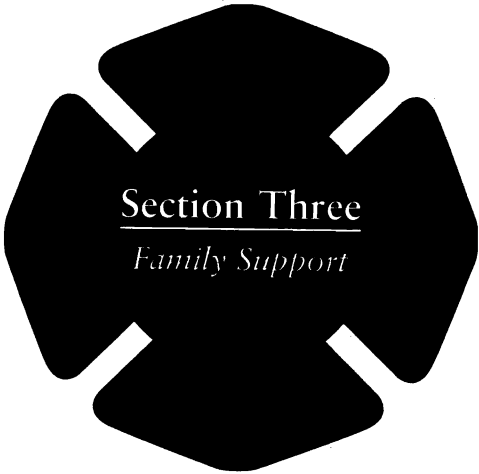
- Clearly identify yourself and present identification, then ask to come in.
- Notification should take place in a private setting.
- If you don't know the family member, make sure you are talking to the right person.



-
- Begin with “I have very bad news,” or “I’m so sorry to have to tell you this.”
 - Use the words “died” and “dead” rather than terms such as “passed away” so the message is absolutely clear. Speak slowly. Get to the point quickly.
 - Calmly answer the survivor’s questions. It is fine to say, “I don’t know” if you don’t.
 - Use his or her name when referring to the firefighter, rather than saying “the body.”

With Compassion

- Allow survivors to express emotions. Do not try to talk them out of their grief.
- Accept your own emotions. It’s okay if you cry during notification, but stay calm.
- Never leave immediately after making a notification. Offer to help the survivor call friends or family members. Do not leave before someone else arrives.
- Do not take the firefighter’s personal items with you when you make the notification. Tell the family they will receive them later. Most survivors will need some time before they feel able to deal with these items.
- Provide the survivor the opportunity to see the deceased firefighter, even if the body is badly disfigured. Offer to transport the family to where the firefighter is, and help prepare them for what they will see.
- Before leaving, write down important information, including the names and phone numbers of the department personnel who will work with the family.
- Have one member of the department stay with the family, unless the family declines.



Section Three

Family Support



Families of fallen firefighters shared what helped them most and what they wished their department would have done. Here are some of their suggestions. (online at www.firehero.org)

How to Help the Family... *At the Hospital or the Morgue*

- Have a member of the department drive the family to the hospital and stay for as long as necessary.
- Work with the hospital staff to secure a private room where the family can gather. This should be separate from the general waiting area, if possible.
- Assist the family in dealing with hospital staff. If you have EMTs in the department, ask them to help with their hospital contacts.
- Provide assistance to the family in making calls to relatives and close friends. Answer incoming calls for the family or get messages to them at the hospital.
- Work with the family to set guidelines for dealing with the media. The family may wish to have a member of the department speak for them.
- In cases of extended hospitalization, offer to assist with day-to-day tasks such as home maintenance, arranging childcare, or bringing meals and other necessities to the family.
- If the firefighter is taken to a specialized hospital out of the local area, assist with this process. Consider asking another department close to that hospital to assist you in supporting the family while the firefighter remains hospitalized.
- Encourage the family to spend time with the injured or deceased firefighter, regardless of the type of injury.
- If the firefighter is badly burned or disfigured, help prepare the family for what they will see. Always allow family members to make the decision.
- Have someone available to drive the family home from the hospital. Offer to help with continuing visits as much as resources allow. Offer to stay with the family at the house.
- Help the family keep track of incoming medical bills and organize files for claims.



How to Help the Family...

From Time of Death Through the Funeral

- Notify the Department of Justice of the death. This will begin the process of reviewing eligibility for the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.
- Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation about the death. This will assure the beginning of emotional support for both the family and the department.
- Work with the family in planning the funeral. Remember that the family's wishes should always come first. If they want a private funeral, the department can still hold a memorial service.
- If the family wants a fire service funeral, secure a uniform for the burial.
- If there are children in the family, consider creating a special role for them, such as riding on the fire truck in the funeral procession. (Be sure to ask a parent before mentioning this to the children!)
- Offer to assist with lodging or transportation for out of town relatives and friends.
- Offer to have a member of the department stay with the family prior to the funeral. In smaller departments, consider rotating people as needed in order to maintain a department presence with the family.
- Have someone available for tasks such as answering the phone, driving the family to the funeral home to make arrangements, or running errands.
- Help coordinate household duties such as food preparation, cleaning, and childcare. Do necessary maintenance such as mowing the grass or clearing the snow.
- If donations are collected for the family, set up a bank account to deposit these funds.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement officials to make routine checks of residence and neighborhood.



How to Help the Family... *Ongoing Support*

- Only promise what you actually can do. Keep all your promises.
- Instead of saying “Call if you need anything” offer to help with specific tasks and then follow through. For instance, say “I would like to come over on Thursday to fix the fence.”
- Continue to talk with the family about your memories of the firefighter. Most families want to hear about their loved one, even if it is emotionally difficult.
- Remember that parents of a fallen firefighter need support and contact just like spouses and children do.
- Help with what the firefighter used to do—yard work, fixing things around the house, attending children’s sports and school events, etc.
- Take all steps necessary to secure benefits for the family. The process is often lengthy, so keep the family involved.
- Continue to invite the family to department events, but don’t be disappointed if they don’t always attend.
- Remember that some events, such as holidays and the anniversary of the date of death, may be especially difficult for the family. Even families who seem to be doing well may need extra support and contact during these times.
- Contact the family before releasing any information on investigations, incident reports, etc.
- Consider creating some kind of tribute to the fallen firefighter. This could be a local memorial, a video tribute, a scrapbook, or a scholarship in the firefighter’s name. Prepare a tribute that is fitting for your firefighter and special to the family.
- Provide survivors with information on the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's programs for survivors. Contact the Foundation to get support for the family.
- Encourage the family to attend the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend and other local, state, and national tributes. Offer to help make travel arrangements and attend with them whenever possible.



Signs Of Grief

Grief can affect many aspects of a person's life. The following symptoms are typical signs of grief. They indicate that a person may need extra support, but are not necessarily signs of a serious problem.

Emotional Signs

sadness	anxiety
helplessness	shock
relief	anger
loneliness	feeling of freedom
guilt	fatigue
yearning	numbness

Behavioral Signs

social withdrawal
crying and sighing
searching for the deceased person
absentmindedness
sleep and appetite disturbance
avoiding reminders of the deceased person
dreaming of the loved one
carrying objects or wearing clothes
belonging to the loved one

Cognitive Signs

disbelief
confusion
preoccupation
hallucinations
denial
a sense of presence of the deceased

Physical Signs

hollow feeling in the stomach
tightness in chest or throat
dry mouth
breathlessness
lack of energy
feeling of panic
muscle weakness
sense of depersonalization
increased sensitivity to noise



Section Four

Department Support



Steps to Take Immediately after a Line-of Duty Death

Here are some important steps that a department needs to take to help the firefighter's family, members of the department, and the community.

1. Notify the family of the fallen firefighter. Once you are sure this has happened, get information to members of the department, local and state officials, and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.
2. Contact the Department of Justice's Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Program.

PSOB offers a lump sum death benefit to survivors of public safety officers who die in the line of duty from a traumatic injury or heart attack. As of October 2004, the benefit was \$275, 658. The amount is adjusted each October. There are specific procedures that need to be followed in filing for this benefit.

Before you report a firefighter death, have basic information available on the incident, your department, and the fallen firefighter and his or her immediate next-of-kin. Call PSOB at 888-744-6513. Make that call even if you are not sure whether your firefighter's family will qualify for benefits under this program.

Be sure you know what the requirements are in your jurisdiction for conducting an autopsy. You can find that information at www.cdc.gov/epo/dphsi/mecisp/death_investigation.htm or call the Foundation and we will fax your state information.

3. Use the attached checklist to determine what needs to be done immediately, before and during the funeral, and longer term.

If you would like to speak directly with another senior fire officer who has lost a firefighter in the line of duty and can offer some professional and personal support, please contact the Foundation.

4. To find out what benefits exist for survivors of fallen firefighters in your state, go to www.firehero.org and click on Benefits. Once you have a list, start contacting the state officials for each program. Benefits may include lump-sum death payments, workers' compensation, funeral benefits, pensions and retirement programs, scholarships, and non-profit/private support. In many states, departments are required to notify workers compensation within 24 hours of the incident.



Let the family know the Foundation has a Survivors Benefits Guide and a network of survivors who can help them through the maze of paperwork. We will also have a handbook available for departments on the full range of benefits for which a family may be eligible.

5. Begin preparations for a fire service funeral or memorial service, if the family wants this. A comprehensive Funeral Guide will help you plan a fitting tribute. Download a copy from our Web site or call the Foundation to request one.

Let the family know about organizations that provide funeral services and fire service uniforms free of charge.

- Dignity Memorial offers a Public Servants Program that provides free funeral services in many communities across the country. Go to www.dignitymemorial.com to see if there is a member funeral home in your community. Or call 800-344-6489
- At the request of the family of a firefighter killed in the line of duty, Lighthouse Uniform Company offers a free Class A Dress Uniform for burial. Contact the company at www.fireuniform.com or call 800-426-5225, 24 hours a day.





Line-of-Duty Death Action Checklist

(online at www.firehero.org)

FIRST 24 HOURS

Notification

- Assign a 2-person team to notify the firefighter's family, in person, before releasing any information.
- Notify all on- and off-duty personnel, including chaplain.
- Notify elected officials and other key people in the community of the death.
- Notify all other fire chiefs in the jurisdiction.
- Notify the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program office.

Family Support

- Designate a family support liaison (team) and offer to stay with the family around the clock.
- Designate a hospital liaison, if appropriate.
- Meet with the family to explain all the support the fire department can provide.
- Collect the deceased firefighter's department belongings to give to the family later. Inventory and document in the presence of a witness.

Department Support

- Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Chief-to-Chief Network as needed for assistance.
- Arrange critical incident debriefing for the department.





Dealing with the Incident

- _____ Determine the type of firefighter fatality investigation to conduct in addition to the NIOSH investigation (i.e., internal or external board of inquiry; arson-, accident- or homicide-related).
- _____ Contact the departmental or jurisdictional attorney regarding possible legal issues.

Dealing with the Community and the Media

- _____ Prepare a summary of facts about the firefighter and the incident to use for public release of information.
- _____ Prepare a written statement for the chief or spokesperson to release to the media.
- _____ Hold a briefing with the media.



Line-of-Duty Death Action Checklist

(online at www.firehero.org)

DAY TWO THROUGH THE FUNERAL

Funeral/Memorial Service

- Assist the family in planning the funeral as they choose.
- Continue to inform department members of the details regarding the incident and the funeral/memorial service plans.
- Coordinate plans for fire department participation in funeral.

Family Support

- Request that local law enforcement officials make routine checks of the family's residence during the funeral and for several weeks afterwards.
- Assist the family with tasks related to home maintenance, transportation of out-of-town family and friends, childcare, etc.

Department Support

- Monitor department members closest to the incident and the fallen firefighter to see how they are dealing with the loss.





Line-of-Duty Death Action Checklist

(online at www.firehero.org)

AFTER THE FUNERAL

Family Support

- ___ Continue to invite the family to department events and activities.
- ___ Provide assistance with routine tasks (home maintenance, running errands, etc.)
- ___ Assign someone to assist the family in accessing all benefits for which they are eligible.
- ___ Offer to “be there” at special times/events (children’s activities, holidays, etc.)

Department Support

- ___ Assist department members in accessing additional support, as needed.

Memorials and Tributes

- ___ Inform and include families in local, state, and national tributes to the firefighter.
- ___ Make the family aware of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and its support programs for fire service survivors.
- ___ Plan to attend the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend and to send a family escort and your honor guard unit.

Department Issues/Planning

- ___ Update Emergency Contact Information for all department members.
- ___ Create or revise the department’s Line-of-Duty Death plan.



CHIEF TO CHIEF

N E T W O R K

A line-of-duty death forever changes the fire department or agency and the community. So where does a chief turn for support after this tragedy?

The Chief-to-Chief Network grew out of a need expressed by chiefs who had lost a firefighter in the line of duty. They said that they felt very isolated after the death of a firefighter and that they had no one to turn to for advice and support.

The Foundation has established a network of senior fire officers who have one thing in common. They have all experienced the death of a firefighter in the line of duty and understand what a department goes through.

How It Works

After learning about a line-of-duty death, the Foundation gathers information about the incident and the fire department.

We then arrange for a chief-to-chief contact, matching chiefs by criteria such as department size and location, career or volunteer status and the nature of the incident.

Chief-to-Chief Support

Network members share information on issues such as:

- incident follow-up and investigations
- support for the fallen firefighter's family and coworkers
- funeral and memorial service arrangements
- requests for information from media and community
- personal feelings of loss

All discussions are confidential.

The Foundation also identifies graduates of the training class who live nearby. We ask them to provide funeral guides and other key resources within the first 24 hours.

For more information, contact the Foundation.



Preparing a Eulogy

For years, members of the fire service have told us that preparing a eulogy was one of the most difficult things they had ever done. They wanted their remarks to be both comforting and respectful.

A eulogy is for the living, most importantly for family and close friends. So we have turned to survivors and friends of fallen firefighters to share what meant the most to them. We also have asked senior fire officers what worked best in their preparation and delivery.

If you asked to deliver a eulogy for a fallen firefighter from your department, here are a few guidelines that may help you gather your thoughts and prepare a fitting tribute.

Research

- Get the key facts—age, nickname, names of family members and closest friends, timeline of key events in the person’s life, personal and professional accomplishments, honors and awards received
- Ask friends and family members for stories that illustrate how they want to remember their loved one. If you use one of these stories, remember to acknowledge the source. For example, “Jim’s daughters told me...” or “Ann’s father reminded me that ...”
- Include information about the firefighter’s character and personality. What was the firefighter proudest of in his or her life? For what would he or she want to be remembered?
- If you knew the firefighter, include personal anecdotes and memories.
- If you did not know the firefighter personally, say that! Speak with people who did, especially those who shared years of friendship and memories.

Organize

- You may want to use a theme to tie your presentation together. For example, “Jack loved adventure,” or, “In everything he did, Don reached out to help other people.”
- It may help to put your ideas on note cards and then arrange them in a logical order for your presentation



Draft

- Begin by expressing your condolences and the department's sense of loss.
- Acknowledge family members, including spouse or significant other, children, parents, siblings, and close friends.
- Focus on the person's life, not the circumstances that lead to the death.
- Include funny stories. Even in the midst of deep grief, it is important to smile. And remember to mention the source of the story, if appropriate.
- Include a statement of support from the department. Acknowledge the department member who is acting as the liaison for the family. The department must follow through on any promised support, so only promise what you can ensure will be delivered.
- Have a printed copy of the final eulogy ready for the family and others who may want a copy.

Practice

- Review and practice your remarks before the service. If you are nervous about speaking in front of other people, practice speaking in front of someone you trust to give you honest, supportive feedback.
- It is okay to show emotion!
- Have a back-up plan so someone else can take over if you cannot finish speaking.
- Be prepared to adjust your planned remarks. Before you speak, another person may use some of the same stories or information. Acknowledge this or have other stories ready.
- Above all, remember not everyone is a great orator. However, families will remember the sincerity of your words and your kindness forever.

Reference Materials

For a list of resources that may help you in writing and delivering a eulogy, go to www.firehero.org and click on the Handling a Line-of-Duty Death icon on the front page.

