

IAFF Funeral Protocol for Line-of-Duty Deaths

The following protocol is to assist IAFF local affiliates in the event of a line-of-duty death of a member. The following information is solely provided for assistance purposes, each individual affiliate should evaluate its local conditions and utilize, amend or change these recommendations accordingly.

I. NOTIFICATION

A. After the notification of a death of a member, the Office of the Chief of the Department should immediately inform Union Office/Officials and the Fire Department Chaplain.

B. Fire Department should be informed that the local union official(s) wish to accompany those department officials that are dispatched to notify next of kin. After family has been officially notified, the fire department and the local union should notify all on duty members (10-15).

II. PLANNING

A. Local Union President must immediately appoint an individual with the sole responsibility of planning for the deceased members funeral.

B. In order for the local union to be fully prepared the following initial information must be gathered from deceased family as soon as possible. A union/department member should be immediately assigned as a family contact to assist the family and serve as the liaison between the family and those planning the funeral.

- Do they want funeral with full department honors?
- Do they want church funeral? If so, what Church?
- Who is their choice of priest, minister, rabbi, or other religious representative?
- Where is the Funeral Home?
- Who is the Funeral Director?

C. If the family requests a departmental funeral, funeral director should be so notified. The funeral director makes arrangements with the church, cemetery, etc. The union/department should make arrangements for the funeral director to receive deceased's uniform in the event of a departmental funeral or if requested by family.

D. List of pallbearers must be obtained from the family. Honor guard members should be selected, usually chosen from house and company members, and scheduled to stand at casket during viewing at funeral home. For funeral service honor guard and ushers should be selected.

E. Arrangements must begin immediately on site selection for Memorial Service (if planned) and for collation (reception) following funeral/memorial service. Vendors should be immediately solicited for assistance.

F. The local union must determine the availability of the following:

- white gloves

- union pins
- badge covers
- bunting (fire stations/union hall)

G. Determine whether church cards (last alarm) are desired and arrange with printer for production (if cards are to be printed). This must be done immediately to allow for printing time.

H. Secure space from local hotel(s). Remember that fire fighters from throughout the International will attempt to attend funeral. Select one hotel as base for International Principal Officer(s), Vice President(s), and staff.

I. Establish liaison with police department. Request that the police department assist with the following:

- Request that police department send out on police blotter the announcement of line-of-duty deaths including as much detail as possible, including funeral arrangements, department and union address, and local union representative responsible for funeral's phone number.
- Request police to provide detail in marked car at deceased house during entire funeral period.
- Request that police have representative at any planning meeting. They can assist with logistical coordination including traffic, crowd control, out-of-town fire fighters, parking, etc.

III. THE FUNERAL

For line-of-duty departmental funerals the following protocol should be arranged:

A. Funeral Director is responsible and has the primary concern of assisting the family, including bring them into church, and seating. Department should select Chief-in-Charge for directing and coordinating fire department and fire fighter involvement in funeral.

B. Honor Guard should post colors prior to church service. Honor guard should be posted outside church on both sides of entrance. Department personnel, union officials, fire fighters and civic delegates should line up with honor guard to street. Family passes between ranks. In all instances, family should enter church ahead of any dignitaries. Ushers should keep front right part of church open for members and delegates. After body is greeted all march into church and are seated in the following fashion:

- Fire Chief
- Union President
- International Principal Officer(s)
- Local union officials
- Deceased's Company
- Delegation of department's chief officers
- Members of department
- Members of other fire departments

C. All remain standing until all fire fighting delegations are in place.

D. At conclusion of service, ushers will direct fire fighting delegation to street where they resume original places, facing church, under direction of chief-in-charge. Pallbearers then proceed out of church with body followed by family and other mourners. Chief-in-Charge gives command for salute as body is brought from church and placed in hearse.

E. After services, funeral director assembles procession. Chief-in-Charge directs all fire fighting personnel, proceed by colors to march ahead of procession to designated pass-in-review position. If desired, a designated fire house could be chosen for pass-in-review. Fire house should have apparatus on apron, with all on-duty personnel at attention, bells tolling as procession passes. After pass-in-review procession proceeds to cemetery.

IV. COMMITTAL

A. Chief-in-charge shall be responsible for assembling fire fighters at grave site. It should immediately be determined how many mourners the cemetery and/or grave site area can accommodate. Committal is usually for family and close friends. Apparatus can be detailed to cemetery gates with fire fighters in full dress.

B. Arrangements can be made for bugler for TAPS and sole bagpiper for playing Amazing Grace, or appropriate hymn. Local musicians unions or schools can usually provide these individuals if unavailable on fire or police department.

C. Dismissal from grave site is generally followed by reception.

V. BELL CEREMONY AND PRAYER

A. The ringing of the bell and the Fire Fighter's Prayer are two traditions of the fire service which reflect respect and honor to those who gave their lives to their duty. The ringing of the bell represents the end of the emergency and the return to quarters, and is usually three rings of the bell, three times.

B. Both are provided for local adoption.

VI. PERIOD OF MOURNING AND HONOR

A. After notification of line-of-duty death is completed, flags at all jurisdiction's properties (government center, fire stations, schools, etc.) should be lowered to half-staff in honor of fallen fire fighter.

B. Flags at jurisdiction's properties should remain at half-staff from date of death through the day of committal.

C. Flags at fire stations and union hall should remain at half-staff for a period of 30 days. Funeral bunting, if used, should also remain on fire stations and union hall for 30 days.

D. After notification of line-of-duty death is completed, badge covers should be placed across the face of each member's badge. Badge cover should remain for 30 days.

BELL CEREMONY

The men and women of today's fire service are confronted with a more dangerous work environment than ever before. We are forced to continually change our strategies and tactics to accomplish our tasks.

Our methods may change, but our goals remain the same as they were in the past, to save lives and to protect property, sometimes at a terrible cost. This is what we do, this is our chosen profession, this is the tradition of the fire fighter.

The fire service of today is ever changing, but is steeped in traditions 200 years old. One such tradition is the sound of a bell.

In the past, as fire fighters began their tour of duty, it was the bell that signaled the beginning of that day's shift. Throughout the day and night, each alarm was sounded by a bell, which summoned these brave souls to fight fires and to place their lives in jeopardy for the good of their fellow citizen. And when the fire was out and the alarm had come to an end, it was the bell that signaled to all the completion of that call. When a fire fighter had died in the line of duty, paying the supreme sacrifice, it was the mournful toll of the bell that solemnly announced a comrade's passing.

We utilize these traditions as symbols, which reflect honor and respect on those who have given so much and who have served so well. To symbolize the devotion that these brave souls had for their duty, a special signal of three rings, three times each, represents the end of our comrades' duties and that they will be returning to quarters. And so, to those who have selflessly given their lives for the good of their fellow man, their tasks completed, their duties well done, to our comrades, their last alarm, they are going home.

FIRE FIGHTER'S PRAYER

When I am called to duty, God
Wherever flames may rage
Give me strength to save a life
Whatever be its age.
Let me embrace a little child
Before it is too late
Or save an older person from
The horror of that fate.
Enable me to be alert
And hear the weakest shout,
and quickly and efficiently
To put the fire out.
I want to fill my calling
To give the best in me,
To guard my friend and neighbor
And protect their property.
And, if, according to your will,
While on duty I must answer death's call;
Bless with your protecting hand
My family, one and all.