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PURPOSE

The purpose of this SOP is to provide guidance to the Mesa Fire and Medical Department and its members as to how we as an organization will respond to an active line of duty death event and how we will eventually honor the death of an active or retired member of this department. This SOP will outline notification responsibilities and assist in differentiating between line of duty, active duty, retiree presumptive death, retiree, and former member death. This differentiation will allow the department to honor our members past and present with the proper ceremonial protocol and Departmental involvement.

This SOP will also identify the Arizona Local Assistance Team (LAST) Handbook as the reference document as to how to run a fire service funeral and the National Fallen Fire Fighters LODD Benefits Handbook as a reference document to assist in helping the family in receiving all available benefits.

Lastly, this SOP will identify the Last Wishes and Emergency Contacts documents that the Mesa Fire and Medical Department will send to each sworn member annually to keep on file.

This policy is a joint collaboration between management and labor that only covers the Mesa Fire and Medical Department. How the Mesa Fire and Medical Department chooses to honor its members should not in any way indicate that the deceased member will receive any honors or benefits offered by organizations such as the IAFF, NFFF (PSOB), 100 Club or the State of Arizona.

On Duty Line of Death Incident Departmental Actions

Fire Chief or Assistant Chief (Duty Chief)

The Fire Chief or Assistant Fire Chief will assign the following responsibilities and will coordinate their efforts immediately upon firefighter death or notification of a firefighter with life threatening injuries is transported to the hospital.

- East Deputy/Senior Advisor Responsibilities
- Auditing Officer (Labor)
- Hospital Liaison Officer (On-Call BC)
- Public Information Officer (Deputy Chief/PIO)
- Notification Officer(s) (Executive Staff Member and Labor Rep.)



- Family Liaison Team (Member Designated by Fallen or Labor)
- Benefits Officer (Executive Staff Member and Labor Rep.)
- Funeral Planning Officer (Battalion Chief or Deputy Chief)
- Review Officer/Team (Safety Battalion Chief)

East Deputy/Senior Advisor Responsibilities

- Notify the Duty Chief, PIO, Off-Duty BC's and Deputy Chiefs, Review Team Leader, Police Department and City of Mesa Personnel.
- Request the On-Call CISM and Fire Chaplin to the Hospital or Fire Scene.
- Secure the scene of the incident with the assistance of the Fire Investigator and Mesa PD personnel.
- Document all actions, contacts, requests and other pertinent data. This information is to be provided to the Fire Chief to be kept up to date with events as they happen.
- Coordinate with Alarm to provide move-ups for crews that are on-scene but will be out of service due to the effects of the event.
- Coordinate with Staffing to provide for coverage for those members who choose to leave shift early due to the effects of the event.
- Preserve the scene and all equipment, turnouts and breathing apparatus used by injured or deceased firefighter(s) for the investigation. Ensure all involved equipment and apparatus are placed in the custody of MPD and MFMD's Review Team Leader who will preserve the chain of evidence and work with the manufacturer representatives (i.e. NIOSH and State OSHA).
- Preserve any and all tactical worksheets, video and/or audio for the investigation.

Auditing Officer Responsibilities

- Collect all personal effects of the deceased member including station locker items, tools and equipment, turnouts and breathing apparatus used by the deceased member and have these items stored in a secured area. (Investigators Cage Old Station One). Be advised the Review Officer or Review Team Leader may also need the turnouts and breathing apparatus.
- Secure deceased members vehicle. Maintain key security with other personal items.

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- Conduct an inventory of the personal effects upon receipt and make a written report of all items. (Next of kin will have priority consideration to receive personal effects.)
- Maintain a “chain of custody” for all personal items if needed.
- Once all items have been delivered to the next of kin the written report of items returned will be placed in deceased members file.

Hospital Liaison Officer(s)

- Immediately respond to the receiving hospital(s) and establish contact with hospital staff.
- Request staging location(s) for visitors, fire crews.
- Request private area for family members.
- Coordinate all hospital communications for PIO, Fire Administration, and Fire Ground Commander via telephone.
- Update Fire Ground Command of any significant information relating to the patient’s condition.
- Work with the hospitals PIO to assure that no press releases are made from the hospital and that all patient information will be released through MFMD PIO.
- Assure blood gases are drawn as soon as possible. Toxicology report will be used when determining State, Federal benefits.
- Collect all personal articles of the firefighter (that are at the hospital) should pronouncement of his/her death occur. Forward all personal items to the Auditing Officer.
- Contact MFMD Medical Control Doctor to assist in gathering information if LODD happened within 24 hours of duty.

Public Information Officer Responsibilities

- Public Information Officer will be responsible for the coordination and formation of a public information team. This team will be responsible for addressing the information needs of print, television and radio media, fire departmental communication, city official communications and social media.
- Develop a media staging area at Fire Administration to address news media needs.
- Attempt to collect all facts of the incident as they occurred.

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- Attempt to collect all pertinent and personal information of the victim(s). This information includes but is not limited to name, DOB, file photo, social security number, marital status, dependents, and the names and addresses of next of kin.
- Contact Alarm Room Captain (ARC) update them of current status of the firefighter and instruct them to not issue any statements to the media or anyone else.
- Keep in contact with the Hospital Liaison Officer on the status of injured firefighter(s).
- Provide Notification Officer with the information that they will need prior to making their contact with the next of kin.
- Prepare a written press release.
- Under no circumstances should a press release be issued until next of kin notification is made and authorization from the Fire Chief has been given.
- Assist Fire Chief in communicating formally with the entire Fire Department. (via email)
- Notify other Fire Agencies using the Arizona Fire Chief Association and the Life Safety Council.
- Authorize the CAD announcement of death:
 - CAD announcement should read, "The Fire Chief regrets to announce the death of (rank), (name) who died in the line of duty. (Include a brief description of the circumstances.)"

Notification Officer(s) (Executive Staff, Family Liaison and Labor)

- Make contact with the next of kin in person if possible.
- Use Last Wishes or Emergency Contact document to establish emergency contact information.
- Wear dress uniform with tie if possible.
- Have your official MFMD ID card available if needed.
- Familiarize yourself with the circumstances of the death and the personal data concerning the deceased before making the notification. (Contact PIO)
- Determine if the family has a particular person, specifically a close family member and/or department member to act as a member of the Family Liaison group. Have them attend notification if possible.
- Once notification has taken place the Notification Officer will advise the Fire Chief or his designee, Incident Command, Alarm Room Captain, and the PIO.
- Next of kin contact is made prior to press release.

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- Prepare family for the release of information to the press.
- Have CISM available for the family at this visit if possible.
- Be prepared to stay with next of kin until a family member or friend arrives or as long as requested by the family.

*It is at this time after the notification has been made that the details may be released to the news media via the PIO.

Family Liaison Officer Responsibilities

- On-Call 24 hours a day and will act as a logistical contact for the family.
- Provide transportation for the family and maintains constant communication with Funeral Planning Officer. He/she will work within the Funeral Planning Task Force.
- Develop a Family Liaison Team that includes Labor and/or family friends.

Benefits Officer(s):

- Will work closely with the family and will be a member of the Funeral Planning Taskforce.
- Use the National Fallen Firefighters Benefits Handbook as reference to obtaining all possible survivor benefits. [Survivor Benefits Guide](#)
- Collect all personal and incident information necessary to apply for financial benefits.
- Make contact with the 100 Club as soon as possible. They will provide financial assistance immediately.
- Contact City of Mesa Personnel and the City of Mesa Benefits office to find out what benefits are available to the family and any information available regarding current pay and medical insurance benefits and how long those items will be available to the family.
- Contact Wellness Office for access to the Death Benefit envelope that each member of the Fire Department has on file outlining beneficiary information, burial requests and personal life insurance information.
- Use list available in the Arizona LAST handbook to identify survivor benefit organizations and make contact with each them.



Funeral Planning Officer Responsibilities

Assigned by the Fire Chief and will have full support of the entire Fire Department.

- Form Task Force consisting of Administration, Labor, Day staff and Operations staff to handle all aspects of funeral planning.
- Use the Arizona LAST handbook as a guide to funeral planning. (Officer Assignments, Responsibility Check Sheets, Organizational Chart)
- [AZ L.A.S.T. Funeral Resource Guide](#)
- Contact Arizona LAST for physical assistance or consultation regarding funeral planning and Public Safety Officers Benefits (PSOB).
- Schedule initial planning meeting session and make Officer Assignments. Some assignments will require multiple individuals to accomplish goals. Selection of those individuals will be by the Sector Officers themselves with the approval of the Funeral Planning Officer.
- Coordinate a list of participating members and outside agencies to send "Thank You" cards to.

Review Officer:

- Responsible for the coordination and formation of a Review Team. Identify factors pertaining to the event and recommend actions that would prevent or reduce the risk of a similar event.
- The Review Team shall include but not be limited to the MFMD Fire Marshal, One MFMD Labor representative, one Fire Department Safety Officer, City of Mesa Safety Officer, one Mesa PD Representative, several qualified members from local uninvolved fire and PD agencies to assist with the investigation's discovery and analysis phase and any additional personnel as required by the specific circumstances of the event.
- Begin to gather all available information concerning the incident and circumstances leading to the death.
- Obtain all written, audio, or video of the event. Document and secure evidence which may be a factor in any regulatory actions or litigation resulting from the incident.
- Identify a list of personnel who will need to be interviewed in the next 24-48 hours and give the names to the East Deputy or Incident Commander.



- Set up an interview schedule and ensure all members have the necessary support to attend their scheduled interview.
- Identify all equipment and apparatus that need to be tested or inspected by qualified investigative representatives of the investigative agencies.
- Identify a facility for the Review Team to work from.
- Identify all past and present factors pertaining to the event and prepare the information for analysis by the Review Team. Have the Review Team interpret the findings and make objective recommendations that would prevent or reduce the risk of a similar event.
- If death occurred during firefighting operations - do not include the Fire Investigator on the Review Team. The Review Team report shall be separate and distinct from any Fire Cause Investigation. A copy of the Fire Investigations report will in fact be included in the final Review Team report package.
- Establish and maintain an ongoing liaison with the City Attorney, City Safety Services.
- Ensure a written report is prepared for Fire Administration, City Manager, and City Council.
- Fully cooperate with other governmental agencies that have legal cause to be involved in the investigation of a LODD incident. Some of those organizations may include but are not limited to:
 - OSHA
 - United States Fire Administration
 - National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
 - Law Enforcement Agencies
 - Arizona Industrial Commission
 - Arizona State Fire Marshal's Office

Review Team Responsibilities:

- Interview witnesses
- Obtain Alarm Room tapes and develop a chronological written report of all verbal communications over the radio with time stamps.
- Obtain Alarm Room telephone conversations, person to person communications and any other related CAD information related to the event during the incident.
- Gather and document all physical evidence media video, and citizen video. (coordinate with PD)
- Obtain, examine and secure all protective clothing, breathing apparatus equipment and mobile vehicle recorder data of the apparatus used by the personnel involved in the incident. A complete physical description of the



protective clothing, breathing apparatus and equipment shall be included in the report of the incident. (A performance status report shall be conducted by a qualified professional on all safety equipment.)

- Develop a written report outlining the events and issues that contributed to the chain of events that led up to the LODD.
- Interact with PD and the Fire Investigator as needed.
- Provide report to Investigations Officer to be presented to Executive Staff.

Funeral Planning

- Funeral planning will be at the request and approval of the family of the deceased. All appropriate ceremonial and personal request will be provided for as time and money will allow for. Funeral planning will be accomplished using the Arizona LAST handbook and referencing the Organizational Chart, Sector Assignments, and Funeral Protocols located within the document. [AZ L.A.S.T. Funeral Resource Guide](#)
- Departmental participation is at the discretion of the Fire Chief using the criteria outlined below. (See Circumstances of Death to determine level of departmental participation.)

Circumstances of Death and Employment

Circumstances of Death and Employment Status (to determine level of departmental participation:

1. **Line of Duty Death** (*Sacrifice Honor*): When an active sworn member of the Mesa Fire and Medical Department passes away while performing emergency activities or passes within 24 hours of performing emergency activities or is traveling directly from home to the work or directly from work to home that member shall be given the highest level of honors.
Level 1
2. **Active MFMD Member Death Not Related to Emergency Activities** (*Service Honor*): When any sworn member of the Mesa Fire and Medical Department passes away for any reason other than Line of Duty, that member is eligible for **Level 2** participation by the Department.



3. **Retired Sworn Presumptive Death** (*Sacrifice Honor*): Retirement or Medical Retirement as a result of an injury or presumptive illness as a result of prior active duty with MFMD. Family requests MFMD for participation as death was a result of a prior active duty event. **Level 1**
4. **Retired Sworn Member of MFMD** (*Service Honor*): Anytime a retired member's family requests departmental participation they are eligible for **Level 3** participation.
5. **Former Member of MFMD** (*Service Honor*): Any former sworn member of the Mesa Fire and Medical Department whose family requests participation is eligible for **Level 4** participation.
6. **Civilian Active**: Any active civilian member of the Mesa Fire and Medical Department whose family requests participation is eligible for **Level 3** participation.
7. **Civilian Retired**: Any former civilian member of the Mesa Fire and Medical Department in good standing whose family requests participation is eligible for **Level 4** participation.

Levels of Departmental Participation

**Note, all requests for participation will be approved by Executive Staff based upon availability of resources as to not interfere with departmental service delivery.

Level 1- Full Honors LODD Departmental Funeral (Upon families' approval)

- Deputy or Battalion Chief will be assigned to the task of funeral planning and assembling a Task Force to accomplish the process of planning and participation. This group will consist of on-duty, off-duty members including members of Local 2260 and anyone the family assigns as a family liaison.
- Four frontline apparatus will participate either as a static display (i.e. mortuary viewing or crossed aerals.), or within the procession.
- Full Honor Guard/Pipes and Drums.

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- Class "A" dress uniform is required.
- AZ LAST Funeral Planning Handbook will be the reference document for funeral planning. [AZ L.A.S.T. Funeral Resource Guide](#)

Level 2- Active Duty Departmental Funeral (Upon families' approval)

- Deputy or Battalion Chief will be assigned to the task of funeral planning and assembling a Task Force to accomplish the process of planning and participation. This group will consist of on-duty, off-duty members including members of Local 2260 and anyone the family assigns as a family liaison.
- Two frontline apparatus will participate either as a static display (i.e. mortuary viewing or crossed aerals.), or within the procession.
- Full Honor Guard/Pipes and Drums.
- Class "A" dress uniform is required.
- AZ LAST Funeral Planning Handbook will be the reference document for funeral planning. [AZ L.A.S.T. Funeral Resource Guide](#)

Level 3- Retired Sworn (Upon families' request for assistance)

- Deputy Chief or Battalion Chief assigned to address family requests.
- Honor Guard and 1-Piper.
- 1 Frontline Apparatus.
- Parade Truck.

Level 4- Former Member Sworn (Upon families' request for assistance)

- Deputy Chief or Battalion Chief assigned to address family requests.
- Honor Guard and 1-Piper.
- Parade Truck.



Beneficiary/Benefits Information:

The Mesa Fire and Medical Department will provide annually the Last Wishes or Emergency Contact forms to be filled out by all department employees. These forms are critical to assisting your family with locating and receiving the survivor benefits they deserve as a result of your passing. These forms will be distributed in October every year during the same time the City of Mesa is doing Open Enrollment for medical benefits. You will receive two forms and an envelope with your name on it from the Wellness Division. You are asked to fill out at least one of the packets sign it and return it to the Wellness Division in the envelope provided.

These forms are sealed in the envelope to only be open in the event of your untimely death. With every new year comes changes in all of our lives so with this program you will have the opportunity annually to make changes to these forms. If you have changes that need to be made any other time during the year other than October you can request via email a new form and envelope from the Wellness Division.

The Mesa Fire and Medical Department strongly suggests participating in this program. Having clarity regarding last wishes and survivor benefits goes a long way in assisting in the healing process for a family who has just lost a loved one to a LODD.