

# Delaware County Emergency Medical Service Standard Operating Guidelines

Subject	Effective	Supersedes	This Sheet	Total
Line of Duty Death	August 1, 2007	All	1	11

The purpose of this policy is to outline the responsibilities for following departmental protocols involving a DCEMS employee line of duty death or serious injury, or that of a retired member, past member, part of a member's immediate family, or an important associate of Delaware County EMS.

The death of any member of the Delaware County Emergency Medical Service Department while on duty, or while undergoing medical treatment for any injury or disease resulting from such duty, is considered a line of duty death. This also includes the death of a Department member while traveling in connection with such duty, or while engaging in EMS activities off duty.

It will be the responsibility of all Delaware County EMS employees to understand and follow this procedure.

## POLICY

It is the policy of Delaware County EMS to provide liaison assistance to the immediate family of any member, as defined in the policy, which dies or is seriously injured. The Department will provide clarification and comprehensive study of survivor benefits, as well as other tangible and intangible emotional support during this traumatic adjustment for the surviving family. Funeral arrangements of the deceased are to be decided by the FAMILY, with their wishes taking precedence over the Department's or the Union's. Department personnel shall complete and maintain a confidential Change of Employee Data form to be kept in their personnel file. These may be updated anytime at the individual's request.

## PROCEDURE

This procedure defines the policies and responsibilities to be followed in the event of a line of duty death, and can be escalated in the event of multiple deaths, or a number of members seriously injured.

## PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES:

### EMS Captain's Responsibilities:

In the event of a line of duty death, the on-duty EMS Captains shall immediately:

- Notify the EMS Chief, the EMS Assistant Chief, the Union President, the Delaware County Public Information Officer, all off-duty EMS Captains, and the Delaware County Safety Officer.
- Secure the scene of the incident with the assistance of the Delaware County Sheriff's Office.
- Direct the PIO and Central to withhold release of personal data relating to the member or the death, pending notification of next of kin.
- Assign personnel from the EMS Administration Office to assemble as much personal data as possible concerning the deceased member. Particular information needed includes: Name, date

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of birth, file photo, social security number, marital status, dependents, and name(s) and address(s) of next of kin.

- Assign an Auditing Officer as soon as possible to secure the personal effects of the deceased and deliver them to the Office of the EMS Chief.
- Assign a Hospital Liaison Officer(s) to go to the receiving hospital(s) where the injured employee(s) are sent.
- Document all actions, contacts, requests, and other pertinent data. This information is to be provided to the EMS Chief. The Union President may request this documentation to be kept up to date with the events as they've happened.
- Coordinate with other EMS Captains a personnel roster (DCEMS & other offering agencies) to relieve crews on scene and provide personnel to fill staff functions.
- Preserve any equipment, safety gear, uniforms, etc. used by the injured or deceased employee for the investigation.
- Preserve any and all tactical worksheets, video and/or audio tapes for the investigation.

#### EMS Chief and/or Assistant Chief:

The EMS Chief or Assistant Chief may choose to hold daily briefings in order to communicate activities of all assigned officers.

Once notified, the EMS Chief or his designee shall notify:

- The County Administrator
- The County Director of Administrative Services
- The County Prosecutor's Office
- The Delaware County EMS Medical Director

Other responsibilities:

- Assign personnel from Administrative Offices to retrieve the confidential Employee Notification Packet, if completed. If the Employee Notification Packet was not completed, assemble as much personal data as possible concerning the deceased. Particular information needed includes: Name, date of birth, File Photo, Social Security Number, Marital Status, Dependents and Name(s), Address(s) of Next of Kin. This information must be made available to the Notification Officer as soon as possible.
- Ensure that the EMS Captain has assigned an Auditing Officer and Hospital Liaison Officer.
- Assign a Notification Team consisting of two people. In case of multiple deaths or injuries, one Notification Team per surviving family should be assigned. He/she should make the notification personally if at all possible, or assign a Notification Officer and either another Chief Officer or the person listed in the Employee Notification Packet, if readily available, to accompany him to make the notification.
- Assign a Survivor Action Officer.

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- Assign a Family Liaison Officer, or one per surviving family.

## ASSIGNED ROLES:

### Auditing Officer:

This position ensures the security and proper distribution of the personal effects of a member in the event of his/her death. Personal effects shall include all property owned by the deceased member that is kept on DCEMS department property at the time of the member's death.

Responsibilities – in the event of the death of a member, whether on or off duty, the following steps shall be followed in the gathering and disposition of his/her personal effects:

The Auditing Officer will be assigned to secure the personal effects of the deceased member and deliver them to the Office of the EMS Chief. All items will be kept secured in his office. The deceased member's vehicle will be secured at the work site and the keys forwarded with the personal effects. The EMS Assistant Chief will conduct an inventory of the personal effects upon receipt and make a written report of all items. The next of kin will be given priority consideration to receive the property. Care should be exercised in selecting a tactful time for delivery of the personal effects to the next of kin. Documentation is required indicating the date, time and location of disposition. The name and the relationship of the individual accepting the property will also be noted. Documentation will then be forwarded to the EMS Chief's office for placement in the deceased member's personnel file.

### Hospital Liaison Officer(s):

This position goes directly to the receiving hospital(s) and maintains a liaison with the hospital staff, PIOs, DCEMS Administration, and the incident scene commanders via telephone.

Responsibilities – until relieved:

- Update incident commanders of any significant information relating to the patient's condition.
- Assure that no press releases are made.
- Collect all personal articles of the member, should pronouncement of his/her death occur.

### Public Information Officer:

This position should be appointed as soon as possible if the County Emergency Services PIO is not readily available.

Responsibilities – until relieved:

- Attempt to collect all the facts of the incident as it occurred.

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- Make contact, preferably via telephone, with the 9-1-1 Central Supervisor (Do Not Use The Radio)
  - Fill them in on the situation.
  - Instruct them not to issue any statements to the media or to anyone else.
  - Advise them they will be receiving a written news release as soon as next of kin have been notified.
- Begin to collect all pertinent and personal information on the victim(s).
- Keep in contact via telephone with the Hospital Liaison Officer(s) on status of injured member(s)
- Provide Notification Officer(s) with the information they need prior to making their contact with the next of kin.
- Begin to prepare a written press release.
- Under no circumstances should a press release be issued until next of kin notification can be made and the proper authority has been given to issue the news release. (See Notification Officer).

## Notification Officer(s):

The EMS Chief, or the EMS Assistant Chief only in his or her absence, is responsible for notification of the next of kin. The specific assignment of this duty will be made solely by the EMS Chief unless as above. Prompt and judicious notification of the next of kin is of the utmost importance in the case of a line of duty death. Notification shall be made by the EMS Chief thru personal contact. The official 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.

## Responsibilities –

The Notification Officer(s) are responsible for making contact with the next of kin. This shall be done in person whenever possible. This official notification must be made before any details are released to the news media. The Notification Officer(s) should be prepared to assist the next of kin with the immediate emotional trauma associated with the notification. A friend of the family or a clergy member may be of valuable assistance at this time. The Notification Officer(s) should be prepared to stay with the next of kin until a family member or friend arrives, or as long as is requested.

## Discussion –

It shall be the responsibility of the EMS Chief to properly notify the next of kin of a member who has suffered severe injuries or has died. The Chief may personally make the notification and/or designate a Notification Officer. The Notification Officer MUST familiarize him/herself with the circumstances of the death and personal data concerning the death before making the notification. By having a second person in attendance, the Chief will be available to leave shortly after to return to the scene if necessary. The second person remains to see what they can do for the family, getting additional medical help for the family if needed, being the compassionate listener.

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Notification MUST be made in person, and NEVER ALONE. If there is an opportunity to get to the hospital prior to the death of a member, DON'T WAIT for the Notification Delegation to gather; attempt to bring the spouse / significant-other to the hospital. The family should learn of the death from the Department FIRST, and not from the press or other sources.

NEVER make a death notification on the doorstep. Ask to be admitted to the home. Ask the family member if he/she would like to sit down. Inform the family member slowly and clearly of the information you have. If specifics of the incident are known, the Notification Officer should relay as much information as possible to the family. Answer all questions honestly. Be sure to use the member's first name during the notification. If the member has died, relay that information. Never give the family a false sense of hope. Use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away." Offer to make phone calls if the family wishes.

The Notification Officer Shall:

- Wear the EMS Department uniform, Class A style if time permits.
- Assign an EMS member to accompany him/her, also in uniform.
- Have an official Delaware County Photo Identification in their possession.
- Familiarize themselves with the circumstances of the death and the personal data concerning the deceased before making the notification (contact the PIO).
- Determine if the family has a particular person, specifically a close family member and/or department member, to act as Family Liaison Officer.
- Once notification has been made, the Notification Officer will advise the EMS Chief or his designee, the Incident Commander, the 9-1-1 Center Supervisor and the Public Information Officer.

An official announcement may then be made and details may be released to the news media. The 9-1-1 Center should receive the official press release from the PIO in writing (use fax if necessary).

## Survivor Action Officer:

The EMS Chief will appoint a Survivor Action Officer to work in conjunction with a Union representative in providing liaison with the next of kin.

To provide a sense of continuity and familiarity for the surviving family, it may be advantageous in some cases for the Notification Officer to assume the duties of the Survivor Action Officer. The Survivor Action Officer is a special staff assignment. As a direct representative of the EMS Chief, the Survivor Action Officer will receive the full cooperation of the entire EMS Department. The Survivor Action Officer will report directly to the EMS Chief or his designee.

The Survivor Action Officer is responsible for the management of several important activities. The principle concern is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. The Survivor Action Officer will render

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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 incidents involving multiple deaths, more than one Survivor Action Officer shall be assigned.

The Survivor Action Officer should form a committee consisting of a number of personnel assigned to handle the specific aspects of the funeral arrangements and to assist the surviving family. This committee should be formed as soon as possible after the death to begin operations. This is of particular importance when operating during weekends or holidays.

In all cases, the level of EMS Department participation with the funeral arrangements will be at the discretion of the surviving family. In incidents involving multiple deaths, planning funeral arrangements between surviving families will require the assignment of more than one officer.

## Family Liaison Officer:

This position will be on call to the surviving family 24 hours a day as a logistical contact. Provides transportation to the family and maintains constant communication with the Survivor Action Officer. An ideal person for this assignment is a departmental friend of the deceased. He/she will be under the direction of the Survivor Action Officer.

## FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS

### Survivor Action Committee:

Under the direction of the Survivor Action Officer, provides coordination and interaction with:

- The Funeral Home Director
- The Minister and church to arrange the funeral service
- The agency responsible for the cemetery
  - When meeting with the family and minister for the funeral home and church selection, keep in mind such things as parking and church capacity. Overestimate the number of people to attend. The family minister will know the capabilities of the church. If it is too small, he/she should have little trouble gaining access to a larger one.
  - When dealing with the Funeral Home Director, take a strong position initially. They may be overwhelmed with the magnitude of people who will be involved. Use their expertise, but take control and maintain it.

### Procession Officer:

Arranges and directs the funeral procession:

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- Contact Delaware County Sheriff's Office (or appropriate law enforcement) as soon as the church and cemetery are confirmed. They will set the procession route. If the route should cross RR tracks, it would be a good idea to contact the 9-1-1 Center to coordinate withholding train traffic.
- The Procession Officer and the EMS Captains need to determine which companies will standby along the route. Maps should be prepared and given to respective companies and the 9-1-1 Center that include directions, placements and times. Law Enforcement Officers escorting the procession should be provided with the same information.
- Select someone to be in charge of a detail of six to eight personnel to coordinate the procession lineup and parking lot exiting. Assign portable radios and a private talkgroup for communication during the procession. The procession plan should be committed to paper and provided to each member of the detail. Provide the parking lot detail with a marked DCEMS vehicle and have it be the last vehicle in the procession. They can give updates and location reports while the procession is underway.
- Get a map of the cemetery to determine the routing thru it. The larger apparatus may not be able to negotiate some turns in the older sections. Do this the day before.
- Have the Law Enforcement escorts and parking lot detail meet at the church 90 minutes before the start of the services. Out of town trucks and people will be arriving early.
- Contact Delaware Area Transit Authority (DATA) to acquire at least two (2) buses for the procession. Have them meet at a predetermined location to pickup individuals wishing to attend but who do not wish to drive themselves.

## Resource Manager:

Provides necessary support functions:

- Select the number of trucks and cars that will be needed to transport the deceased, pallbearers, County Officials, Department Officials, Union Officials, etc.
- Have a new pair of stenciled safety gear made to be placed on the truck carrying the deceased.
- Obtain a new American Flag, a board or placard with the member's name to hang on the tailboard of the Medic. Large picture blowups should be obtained to hang on each side of the Medic.
- Contact the Delaware County Service Center to prepare the truck. Off duty personnel and family may be able to assist in the cleaning and decorating.
- If it is raining, or it appears that it might start to rain, have a contingency plan for emergency car wash. This includes staff vehicles and vehicles used for pallbearers, parking lot details, etc.

## Union President:

Makes notification to and assists with activities of the pallbearers, honorary pallbearers and ushers.

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- The Union President’s FIRST responsibility AFTER notification of next of kin has taken place is to initiate a thorough notification process of all department members as to the loss of the member(s) and the known circumstances of the incident.
- The pallbearers for a line of duty death will be eight members of the EMS Department. The family may request certain individuals act as pallbearers. In the absence of such a request, the Survivor Action Officer will appoint a friend of the deceased to form the party of pallbearers with the Funeral Director and Union President.
- Pallbearers / Ushers shall be in dress uniform to include tie, badge shroud and white gloves.
- Conduct a meeting with the pallbearers (also honorary) the day before the funeral. Establish all procedures at that time (where to stand, when to move, flag placement, etc.). A good place to meet would be at the funeral home (when no visitation is occurring). Arrange with the funeral director to allow the pallbearers to practice handling an empty casket. A casket with a 200lb member in it can weigh upwards of 500 lbs. Make arrangements for this meeting on the first contact with the funeral director. The honorary pallbearers will be needed to assist with loading and unloading the casket from the Medic. This needs to be rehearsed beforehand.
- The ushers to be used for the church services and visitation will be ten EMS Department members. In the absence of family requests for specific individuals to act as ushers, the Survival Action Officer will appoint a friend of the deceased to form the party of ushers. He will work with the Funeral Director and the Union President.
- Conduct an instructional meeting with the ushers before the visitation and the funeral. The Funeral Director will have valuable input in this area.
- Have the ushers at the church services instructed, in place (with white gloves) and ready to seat people a minimum of one hour before the start of services. People will be arriving early.
- The Union President needs to activate and arrange for the Color Guard. They will advise the Union President of their needs and routines.
- If the deceased is NOT a veteran, have the pallbearers or other members fold and present the flag. If this is the case, it needs to be laid out and practiced ahead of time.

## **9-1-1 CENTER ANNOUNCEMENT**

Following notification of the next of kin, a text announcement will be made via the Chief’s text paging system, informing all members of the line of duty death. As an example:

*“The Chief of DCEMS regrets to announce the death of (rank) (name) that died today in the line of duty.” A brief description of the circumstances will follow.*

Immediately after the announcement, all flags on EMS Stations and Delaware County Facilities will be lowered to half-staff and all badges are to be shrouded. Flags will remain at half-staff until the day following the funeral and badge shrouds will be worn for 30 days after the funeral.

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## FUNERAL PROCESSION UNIFORM

Members attending the funeral in uniform shall be in dress uniform to include tie and badge shroud. Members assigned to apparatus stationed along the procession route shall be in dress uniform to include tie and badge shroud. They will take a position near the apparatus and maintain an orderly, visible and respectful formation until the ENTIRE processional has passed their position.

The EMS Captains will coordinate with the surrounding jurisdictions to provide companies at our EMS stations during the funeral. Several offers may be received by the EMS Chief. All offers should be funneled through one person such as an EMS Captain.

## EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION INFORMATION

The Emergency Notification Form is a confidential record, completed by every member of the EMS Department. The form provides DCEMS with emergency numbers and other information for accidents involving a member of the Department, and will remain confidential for all other purposes. Each employee will be asked to complete a form at the time of original employment with the Department. Updates to the information may also be made at any time by sending the revised information to the Department's Business Manager. Members of the Department should list at least three people to contact in case of emergency. These should include immediate family members, close friends and referred clergy members, if any. This information should include work addresses and phone numbers where applicable. The form should also contain information of the member's hospital preference and his/her blood type.

## INVESTIGATION

As soon as possible after a line of duty death has occurred, the EMS Chief shall assign an Investigation Team to conduct an investigation of the circumstances of the event. The objective of this team shall be to thoroughly analyze and document the events leading to the death and to make recommendations aimed at preventing similar occurrences in the future.

This procedure may also be utilized in the event of a serious accident involving Department personnel who may or may not have resulted in death or injuries.

The principle goal of the Investigation shall be to identify the causal factors pertaining to the events and 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.

If the death occurred at an emergency scene, the Investigation Team report shall be separate and distinct from any other report generated. A copy of all report generated, including fire, EMS and law

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enforcement, shall be included in the final report package. The Investigation Team report and all related documentation shall be an internal EMS Departmental administrative report.

The Investigative Team shall include the EMS Assistant Chief, the Delaware County Safety Officer, an EMS Captain, a Delaware County Fire Chief (to be appointed by the EMS Chief), and such additional personnel as may be required by the specific circumstances of the event.

All members of the EMS Department shall give their full and complete cooperation to the Investigation Team.

Responsibilities of the Investigation Team:

- Gathering and analysis of all physical evidence related to the event.
- Interview of all witnesses with direct or indirect knowledge of the circumstances of the event.
- Documentation of radio traffic, telephone conversations, photographs, film, videotape and related information.
- Consultation with persons having special knowledge of the factors involved in the incident, including experts and consultants from the private sector.
- Liaison with other agencies involved in investigation of the incident.
- Development of a full written report of the incident, including conclusions and recommendations.

The Investigation Team Leader shall establish and maintain an ongoing liaison with the Delaware County Prosecutor's Office, Delaware County Safety Officer, and the Human Resources Risk Manager relating to the investigation.

It is the policy of Delaware County EMS to cooperate fully with all other governmental agencies having legal cause to be involved in the investigation of a Line of Duty Death incident and to cooperate voluntarily with organizations working in the areas of occupational safety and health education and training.

Documentation:

The Investigation Team shall ensure that the scene of the incident is fully documented, including diagrams, photographs and observations.

When feasible, all witness interviews shall be recorded and transcribed. When recording and/or transcription is not feasible, the investigator's notes of the interview shall be filed.

- Employees shall have the right to have an IAEP Local R7-11 Union Representative present during any interview.

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The Investigation Team shall:

- Obtain and secure tapes and printouts of telephone and radio conversations and CAD transactions relating to the incident. The pertinent aspects of the radio and telephone tapes shall be transcribed.
- Gather and document any physical evidence relating to the incident. Physical evidence shall be secured and labeled.
- Obtain, examine and secure all protective clothing and equipment used by the personnel involved in the incident. A complete physical description of the protective clothing and equipment shall be included in the report of the incident.
- Review and comment on the application of policies and procedures of the incident, the observance of procedures, their effect on the situation and recommendation for changes, addition or deletions.
- Attempt to obtain any photographs, videotape or other information relating to the incident from news media or other sources. Such evidence shall be obtained with the written agreement that it is to be used only for investigative and educational purposes.
- Interact and cooperate with law enforcement personnel in their activities related to the incident.
- When feasible, the Investigation Team shall obtain copies of autopsy reports, medical treatment records, injury reports, and other information relating to members involved in the incident.

The EMS Chief shall determine the schedule and method of presentation for the final report of the Investigation Team.

In cases involving a Line of Duty Death, it is not recommended that a Formal Incident Analysis be held.

Issuing Authority:



DCEMS Chief Rob Farmer

08/01/2007  
Date