

# THURMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT

<b>GENERAL ORDER</b>	<i>Date Issued:</i> August 27, 2007	<i>Effective Date:</i> August 27, 2007	<i>Order No:</i> Chapter 21.2
<i>Authority: Chief of Police</i> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Gregory L. Eyer</i></p>		<i>Manual Page No:</i>	
<i>Subject: LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY</i>		<i>Replaces Page No:</i>	
<i>CALEA Standard: Chapter 22.2.4</i>	<i>Distribution: ALL</i>	<i>Amended:</i>	<i>Number of Pages: 9</i>
<i>Related Documents:</i>		<i>Rescinds:</i>	

This Directive is for internal use only, and other than as contraindicated here this Directive does not create or enlarge this Department's, governmental entity's, any of this Department's officers, and/or any other entities' civil, criminal, and/or other accountability in any way. This Directive is not to be construed as the creation of a standard of safety or care in any sense, with respect to any complaint, demand for settlement, or any other form of grievance, litigation, and/or other action. Deviations from this Directive, if substantiated, can only form the basis for intra-Departmental administrative action(s) (including discipline and/or termination).

## I. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this order is to outline the Department's response in the event of an Officer's serious injury or death in the line-of-duty. This order will direct the Department's plans and procedures for the proper care for the injured or deceased Officer's family.

## II. POLICY:

It shall be the policy of the Thurmont Police Department to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of an Officer who dies or is seriously injured in the line-of-duty. This responsibility includes providing both tangible and intangible emotional support for the family during this traumatic period of readjustment.

As part of the tangible support the Town of Thurmont shall provide to the family the survivors benefit package. We as the Department shall provide continued emotional support for the family.

## III. DEFINITIONS:

**LINE OF DUTY DEATH OR SERIOUS INJURY:** Any action, felonious or accidental which claims the life or seriously injures, a law enforcement Officer who was performing police functions either while on or off duty. **Survivors:** Include immediate family members of the deceased Officer; Spouse, Children, Parents, Siblings.

## IV. PROCEDURE:

### A. DEATH NOTIFICATION:

1. This procedure is to be followed in cases of critically injured Officers with poor

prognosis or obvious line-of-duty death.

2. Timeliness takes precedence over protocol in the death notification process. The Senior Ranking Officer on the scene is responsible for ensuring that timely notification is made to the surviving family. Upon conformation of death, a death notification must be made to the immediate family shortly after or coincidental with normal command notification. The Chief of Police will designate a ranking Officer as the NOTIFICATION OFFICER. He may assign at least one other Officer to accompany the notification officer. If the Chief of Police is not immediately available to make this designation the responsibility for designating of a Notification Officer will be a Deputy Chief of Police or the Senior Ranking Officer.
3. Notification MUST ALWAYS be made in person and never alone. A Chaplain, Psychologist (if available), and Chief of Police (or designee) should accompany the NOTIFICATION OFFICER. Keep in mind, that if these persons are not readily accessible, notification should NOT be held back until they are assembled. The surviving family should hear of the death from a Department representative FIRST and not from the media or other source.
4. If the opportunity to get the family to the hospital prior to the death of the officer presents itself, DO NOT WAIT for the appropriate delegation to gather.
5. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER should be aware of the following:
  - a. As soon as the family sees you, they will know something is wrong. Ask to be admitted to the house. You should NEVER make a death notification on the doorstep. Gather everyone in the home and ask them to sit down, inform them slowly and clearly of the information you have on the incident, making sure you use the Officer's name during the notification.
  - b. If the Officer has been pronounced dead already, relay that information using words like "died" and "dead" rather than "gone" and "passed away". DO NOT spark a false sense of hope.
  - c. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER will be seriously affected by the death; he should understand that showing emotions is perfectly acceptable.
  - d. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER should be prepared for any or all of the following reactions from the family may include hysteria, anger, fainting, physical violence, shock, etc.
  - e. If the family wishes to go the hospital, they should be transported via police vehicle. It is highly recommended that the family NOT drive themselves to the hospital. Should this present a problem, the family should be accompanied by an Officer in the family vehicle.

6. Officers and Dispatchers should be aware that a line-of-duty death, the external monitoring of the police frequencies will be extensive, particularly by the news media. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. The name of the deceased Officer will never be released to the media before the immediate survivors have been notified. If the media already has the Officer's name, they shall be requested to withhold this information, pending notification of next of kin.
7. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER notifies the senior ranking Officer at the hospital that the family is en-route to the hospital. (by telephone if possible)
8. Notification of immediate survivors beyond the Frederick County area should be made through personal death notification by the local law enforcement agency in that area. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER will obtain the names and addresses of relatives to contact from the immediate family and pass this information to the Communications Center. The Communications Center will then send a Teletype message to the local jurisdiction requesting a PERSONAL notification or the NOTIFICATION OFFICER will contact the jurisdiction personally by telephone.
9. The NOTIFICATION OFFICER will submit a written report of any notifications made through the chain of command to the Chief of Police.

**B. ASSISTANCE AT THE HOSPITAL:**

1. The first ranking Officer to arrive at the hospital becomes HOSPITAL LIAISON. The Hospital Liaison Officer is responsible for coordinating the arrival of immediate survivors, police officials, the media, and others. These responsibilities include:
  - a. Arrangements with hospital personnel for the appropriate waiting facilities. There should be SEGREGATED areas reserved for:
    1. Immediate survivors, the Chief of Police, the NOTIFICATION OFFICER, and only others as requested by the immediate survivors.
    2. A separate area or room for fellow Police Officers and friends.
    3. A media staging area.
  - b. To ensure that medical personnel relate pertinent information on the Officer's condition to the family FIRST.
  - c. Notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all billing for medical services SHALL NOT be sent to the Officer's home, but rather to the Town of Thurmont Finance Department. This may require the Hospital Liaison Officer to contact the hospital during normal business hours to insure that proper billing takes place.
  - d. Arranging transportation for the immediate survivors and others from the hospital

back to the residence.

2. If it is possible for the family to visit a critically injured Officer prior to death, depending on hospital policy, they should be afforded that opportunity with haste. Medical personnel should make the family aware of hospital policy regarding visiting a trauma patient or visitation with the deceased. Medical personnel should also explain why an autopsy is required.
3. Those present at the hospital should be aware of the following when dealing with the immediate survivors:
  - a. **DO NOT BE OVERLY PROTECTIVE OF THE FAMILY.** This includes the sharing of specific information on how the officer met his death, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased Officer.
  - b. Idle promises should not be made to the family at this time. (i.e. "We'll promote him/her posthumously". or "We'll retire his/her badge").
  - c. Do not suggest a survivor be sedated unless medication is requested by that survivor.
  - d. The expression of raw emotion by anyone, including Officers, under these circumstances is perfectly understandable.

**C. FAMILY SUPPORT DURING THE WAKE AND FUNERAL:**

1. Within 24 hours of death, the Chief of Police shall designate a Funeral Liaison Officer, a Benefits Coordinator, a Family Support Advocate, and a Department Liaison (usually the Deputy Chief of Police). These designations are announced to the Department in writing and all referrals are to be made according to these areas of responsibilities.
2. The Chief of Police shall personally notify the surviving family of the designated choices.
3. Communications may require additional employees or overtime to field incoming phone calls. A record should be made of all incoming calls and the callers directed to the appropriate liaison according to responsibility.
4. Within 24 hours, the Chief of Police shall make appropriate referrals for stress debriefing or Officers close to the incident and referrals for the surviving family if they wish.

**D. DEPARTMENT LIAISONS:**

1. This position is usually filled by a Deputy Chief of Police because of the need to make expedient provisions of all department resources and delegation of tasks.

2. The Department Liaison works closely with the Funeral Liaison to ensure the needs and requests of the family are fulfilled regarding funeral arrangements.
3. The Department Liaison directs the funeral activities of the Department and visiting Police Departments, according to the wishes of the family. The Department Liaison is also responsible for:
  - a. Arrangements for travel and lodgings for out-of-town family members.
  - b. Expedient provisions for all Department resources.
  - c. A comprehensive survey of alternate churches and reception hall with seating capacities large enough to accommodate attendance of a law enforcement funeral. This information is given to the family as soon as possible to help them decide on a location. **THE CHOICE REMAINS WITH THE FAMILY.**
  - d. Coordinating all official law enforcement notifications and arrangements for a law enforcement funeral, including honor guard, pallbearers, traffic control, and liaison with visiting law enforcement agencies.
  - e. Liaison with media relations. Media relations shall be handled by the Public Information Officer so as to not jeopardize upcoming legal proceedings. Specific instructions on what information may be released will be given to the Department.

**E. FUNERAL LIAISON OFFICER:**

1. The Funeral Liaison Officer will work closely with the Department Liaison.
2. The Funeral Liaison Officer need not be a ranking Officer, but assignment is critical.
3. The Funeral Liaison Officer is not a decision making position. The Funeral Liaison Officer acts as a facilitator between the Decedent's family and the Department during the wake and funeral. The position requires the Officer have a good knowledge of the family relationships, but not be so emotionally involved with the loss, that he/she would become ineffective. The Funeral Liaison Officer is responsible for:
  - a. Meeting with the family and explaining the responsibilities of the Funeral Liaison Officer.
  - b. Being constantly available to the family throughout the wake and funeral.
  - c. Ensuring that the **NEEDS OF THE FAMILY** come before the wishes of the Police Department.
  - d. Meeting with the family and funeral director regarding the funeral arrangements.

Since most Officers have not prearranged their wishes for the funeral service, the family will most likely need to decide ALL aspects of the funeral. THESE DECISIONS SHOULD REMAIN WITH THE FAMILY. The Funeral Liaison Officer should only make the family aware of what the Police Department may offer in the way of assistance and resources, according to the Department Liaison.

- e. Relaying all available information to the surviving family concerning the circumstances of death and any continuing investigation. Police Departments traditionally are reluctant to talk about this type of information, particularly in sensitive homicide cases. The Funeral Liaison Officer should coordinate with investigating Officers and States Attorney's to ensure the family receives as much information as is possibly allowable during the first few days. A common complaint from families is being "kept in the dark."
- f. Determining the need for travel arrangements for out-of-town family members or any other special needs during the funeral, and reporting same to the Department Liaison.
- g. Reporting to the Department Liaison Officer.
- h. Briefing the family on the Law Enforcement Funeral procedures: (ie. twenty-one gun salute, presentation of the flag, playing of taps, etc.). This is contingent on the FAMILY WISHES.

**F. BENEFITS COORDINATOR:**

- 1. Normally the Chief Financial Officer shall be designated to act as the Benefits Coordinator. The Benefits Coordinator is responsible for:
  - a. Filing worker's compensation claims and related forms.
  - b. Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments available to the family, including the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act provided by the United States Department of Justice, and any fraternal organizations the Officer may be a member of.
  - c. Fielding all questions and telephone calls regarding establishment of any special funds or educational funds.
  - d. Making clear distinction between benefits, (which are financial payments made to the family to ensure financial stability following the loss of a loved one) and funeral payments, (which are funds specifically earmarked for funeral expenses).
  - e. Preparing a printout or other documentation of the benefits/funeral payments due the family, listing named beneficiaries, contacts at the various benefit offices, and

when the family can expect to receive the benefits.

- f. Filing all benefit related paperwork and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received. Private consultants/attorneys should not be used for this purpose if they intend to bill the family for services.
- g. Visiting with the surviving family within a few days of the funeral to discuss benefits. The prepared printout and other documents should be made available to the family at that time.
  1. If there are surviving children from a former marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the child (ren) will be receiving.
  2. Special attention should go to problems with the continuation of health benefits.
- h. Advising the surviving family of the role of Police Associations and Organizations such as Heroes, Inc in making their attorney/financial counselor available to the surviving family for whatever legal/financial counseling is necessary, i.e. establishing trust funds, educational funding, etc.

This attorney should not be affiliated with the Town of Thurmont government and should work as an avid advocate for the family's interest.

#### G. FAMILY SUPPORT ADVOCATE:

1. The Family Support Advocate shall be designated by the Chief of Police and acts as a long-term liaison with the surviving family. The Family Support Advocate should have extensive experience dealing with police victims and witnesses. The Notification Officer or Funeral Liaison Officer may also serve as the Family Support Advocate. This Officer should not be a principal witness in the criminal trial. This Officer's responsibilities include:
  - a. Contact with surviving family members to keep them abreast of criminal proceeding. The family should NEVER learn of developments in the case from the media prior to learning them from the Department.
  - b. Accompany the surviving family to any criminal proceedings. Introducing them to prosecutors, and answering any questions they may have concerning the criminal trial.
  - c. Cooperation with outside peer support groups.
  - d. Ensuring that the surviving family does not feel totally isolated by the Police Department.

- e. Encouraging others to make visits or help with family needs of the surviving family.
  - f. Care should be used that idle promises are not made to the surviving family.
2. The Family Support Advocate should not set time limitations on when the family should "recover" from this traumatic event. The grief process has no timetable. Survivors may experience a complicated grief process.
  3. Survivors should continue to feel a part of the "police family" for which the Officer gave his/her life. The Family Support Advocate should keep in touch with the family with at least monthly telephone calls through the first year, dwindling off as necessary. The needs of the survivors usually dictate the frequency needed.
  4. The Chief of Police, the Family Support Advocate, and others ensure that the anniversary date of the Officer's death is observed with a note to the family and/or flowers sent to the grave; and adequate support is given to the family during holidays, particularly during the first year.

Guidelines recommended in this order are found in the handbook titled "Support Services to Surviving Families of Line-of-Duty Death", provided by Concerns of Police Survivors. Inc. ( C.O.P.S. ), 16921 Croom Road, Brandywine, MD 20613.



**ATTACHMENTS:**

**DOCUMENT DATES:**

*Amended Date:*

*Review Date:*

*Review Date:*

*Rescinds:*

*Order Written By: Lieutenant Shawn R. Tyler*

*Order Edited and Approved By: Chief Gregory L. Eyer*

*CALEA Standards Includes in this Order:  
Chapter 55 Victim / Witness Assistance  
22.2.4*