

# Waltham Police Department

## LINE OF DUTY DEATH OR SERIOUS BODILY INJURY

### CHAPTER 22A

*General Order Number: GO-02*

*Effective Date: 04/2022*

*Accreditation Standard #'s: 22.2.2, 22.2.4, 22.2.6*

#### **POLICY:** [22.2.2-3]

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures that will ensure the proper notification, support, and emotional care for all sworn officers, as well as family members following a line of duty death or serious bodily injury.

It is the policy of the Waltham Police Department to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of any member [22.2.4] who dies in the line of duty or who has suffered a serious bodily injury. [22.2.4A,B] This assistance will be provided whether the death was unlawful (i.e., felonious assault) or accidental (i.e., result of motor vehicle accident) while a member or an officer [22.2.4] was performing police related functions, either on or off duty and while an active member of the department. The Chief of Police may institute certain parts of this policy for cases of an officer's natural death.

Coordination of events following the line of duty death is an extremely important and complex responsibility and as such, the Chief of Police, or his designee, shall appoint a Family Liaison Officer to coordinate all departmental functions and subsequent benefits. Professionalism and compassion shall be exhibited at all times as an obligation to the family survivors and to the law enforcement community. In order to provide the best possible services and support for the employee's family, specific tasks will be assigned to select members of the department. The officers should be members of the Employee Support Services Unit if time permits and a list of those officers should be maintained in Operations. The Chief or his designee shall assign:

- a. Notification Officer
- b. Hospital Liaison Officer
- c. Family Liaison Officer (assigned from ESS Unit)

An explanation of these responsibilities is contained in this policy. An officer may be called upon to perform more than one role.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

**Member:** Any department member, sworn or non-sworn.

**Line of Duty Death:** Any action, felonious or accidental, which claims the life of a department member who is performing work related functions either on or off duty.

**Line of Duty Injury or Illness:** For the purposes of this policy, a line of duty injury or illness

shall be an injury or systemic illness serious enough that it requires hospitalization or time away from the department as ordered by a physician for an indefinite period.

**Survivors:** Primary family members of the injured or deceased officer, including spouse, children, grandchildren, parents, grandparents, siblings, fiancé, and/or significant others.

**Beneficiary:** Those designated by the officer as recipients of specific death benefits.

**Benefits:** Financial payments made to the family to assist with financial stability following the loss of a loved one.

**Funeral Payments:** Financial payments made to the surviving families of an officer killed in the line of duty which are specifically earmarked for funeral expenses.

## **PROCEDURES:**

### **NOTIFICATION OFFICER**

It shall be the responsibility of the Chief of Police or if unavailable, his/her designee to oversee notification of the next of kin of the department member [22.2.4] who has suffered severe injuries or has died. An Emergency Contact Form of all officers shall be maintained in a secure file in the Chief's Office.

When an on-duty death or serious bodily injury occurs, all efforts must be made to conceal the officers' identity from the media (i.e.: conceal cruiser number if motor vehicle accident) until next of kin has been notified.

1. If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate survivor, medical personnel should be available at the place of notification to coincide with the death notification (consider staging an ambulance nearby).
2. Notification must always be made in person by two or more people. The Chief of Police or designee, police chaplain, close friend, or another police survivor could appropriately accompany the Notification Officer. However, if the aforementioned persons are not readily accessible, notification should not be delayed. The Chief of Police or a high- ranking representative, within their discretion, should respond to the residence or the hospital to meet with the family, as quickly as possible.
3. Officers should ask to be admitted into the house as to not make a death notification on the doorstep. Inform family members slowly and clearly of the information that you have. If specifics of the incident are known, the Notification Officer should relay as much information as possible to the family. Be sure to use the officer's name during the notification.
4. If young children are at home, the Notification Officer shall attempt to arrange for babysitting needs. This may involve co-workers' spouses, transportation of children

to a relative's home, or a similar arrangement.

5. Notifying personnel must be reassuring to the survivors. Personnel must be prepared for unexpected responses from survivors including possible verbal or physical attacks, anger, fainting or shock, yelling, etc. The most acceptable comment to newly bereaved people is something such as "I'm so sorry this has happened" and "The Waltham Police Department family shares your loss and pain and we will do everything we can to help you through this." If the officer has died, relay that information. Use words such as "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away".
6. Every attempt should be made to get to the hospital prior to the death of the officer. The family should learn of the death from the department first and not from the press or any other sources.
7. If the family requests to visit the hospital, they should be transported by police cruiser. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves to the hospital. If the family insists on driving, a police escort should accompany them.
8. If the primary survivors are not in close proximity to the area, the family liaison officer shall request personal notification from a public safety agency from the jurisdiction where the survivors are. The family liaison officer is permitted to assist in making transportation arrangements to our area but may not assume responsibility for travel expenses on behalf of the Police Department without the authorization of the Chief of Police. It is the discretion of the Chief or his designee to determine if notification is to be made by the Waltham Police if the deceased or injured officer resides in the surrounding area.
9. Prior to departing for the hospital, the Notification Officer should notify the hospital staff by telephone, if possible, that family member(s) are enroute.
10. The deceased or severely injured officer's parents, if not the next of kin, should also be afforded the courtesy of a personal notification, if possible, and transportation as necessary.
11. In the event of an on-duty death, the external monitoring of police frequencies may be extensive. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. If the media has somehow obtained the officer's name, they should be advised to withhold the information, pending notification of next of kin.

### **HOSPITAL LIAISON OFFICER**

The shift OIC shall be initially responsible for assigning an officer from the ESS Unit as a Hospital Liaison Officer. They are responsible for coordinating the activities of hospital personnel, the

officer's family, police officers, and others. These responsibilities may include:

1. Arrange for a separate area for survivors of the police officer, the Notification Officer and only those others requested by the immediate survivors.
2. Arrange a separate area for the Chief of Police, fellow police officers and friends to assemble.
3. Ensure that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding the officer's condition to the family on a timely basis and before such information is released to others.
4. The Hospital Liaison Officer should ensure that the family is updated regarding the incident and the officer's condition upon their arrival at the hospital and remain at the hospital while the family is present.
5. If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer or employee before death, they should be afforded that opportunity. A police official should "prepare" the family for what they might see in the emergency room and should accompany the family into the room for the visit, if the family requests it. In the event of death, the family should be notified of why an autopsy may be necessary.
6. The Waltham Police Department should arrange transportation for the family back to their residence.
7. Do not be overly protective of the family. This includes the sharing of specific information on how the officer was killed, as well as allowing the family time with the deceased officer.
8. Do not make promises such as "We'll be promoting the officer posthumously."

### **FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER**

After the death of a department member [22.2.4], the Chief of Police will assign, with the approval of the family, a Family Liaison Officer. The selection of a Family Liaison Officer is a critical assignment and this position should be assigned to someone who enjoyed a close relationship with the member and his/her family, but who had no direct involvement in the incident leading to the death. The Family Liaison Officer may be of any rank.

The Family Liaison Officer's role is to act as facilitator between the family and the Department and to ensure that the needs of the family are addressed. The Family Liaison Officer's duties may include:

1. Assisting the family at the hospital;

2. Offer support for the family at the funeral and burial;
3. Help the family with legal and benefit concerns;
4. Arrange for or provide counseling for the family on financial or other matters;
5. Support the family during criminal proceedings, if any;
6. Keep in contact with the family to see that their needs are being met.

a. **Support for the family before and during services:**

The Chief of Police, or a designee, will meet with the family at their home to determine their wishes regarding departmental participation in the preparation of the funeral or services. The Family Liaison Officer will provide all assistance possible, including but not limited to:

1. Arrange for the delivery of the officer's personal belongings to the family.
2. Ensure that the needs of the family come before the wishes of the department.
3. Ensure surviving parents or surrogate parents are afforded recognition and will have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and funeral procession.
4. Will be available to the family throughout this traumatic process.
5. Will provide a list of churches with seating capacities large enough to accommodate attendance at the funeral.
6. Department vehicles and drivers will be made available to the family if they desire transportation to and from the funeral home.
7. Providing the family access to other public safety survivors or other support groups including but not limited to Concerns of Police Survivors.
8. Coordinate the assignment of personnel to remain outside the residence during burial services (if located within the city or surrounding cities).
9. Make certain that routine residence checks are conducted by patrol officers of the survivors' home for as long as is reasonable following the incident.
10. The Family Liaison Officer will coordinate funeral activities and establish itinerary with the following individuals:

- a. Chief of Police and Division Commanders
- b. Funeral Director
- c. Priest or another clergy
- d. Cemetery director
- e. Honor Guard

**b. Service Logistics:**

1. Send a CJIS message containing the following:
  - a. Name of officer
  - b. Date and time of death
  - c. Circumstances surrounding the death
  - d. Funeral arrangements (private service or police funeral)
  - e. Uniform to be worn
  - f. Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers
  - g. Contact person and phone number for visiting departments to indicate their desire to attend and obtain further information.
2. Obtain an American flag, mourning buntings, badges and if the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief, notify the Chief's Office.
3. If the family desires a burial in uniform, obtain a uniform and all accoutrements (except weapons) and deliver them to the funeral home.
4. Assign officers for usher duty at the church.
5. Arrange for stand-by medical personnel for the family, if necessary.
6. Coordinate traffic management, with other jurisdictions if necessary, during the viewing, funeral, and procession.
7. Maintain a roster of all Departments sending personnel to the funeral, including:
  - a. Name and address of responding agency
  - b. Name of the Chief of Police
  - c. Number of officers responding
  - d. Number of officers attending the reception after the funeral
  - e. Number of vehicles

**c. Coordinate Benefits:**

The Family Liaison Officer shall work in conjunction with the Administration Division to gather information on all benefits/funeral payments available to the family. The Family

Liaison Officer is responsible for filing the appropriate benefit paperwork and following through with the family to ensure that these benefits are being received. The Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:

1. Filing Line of Duty Death claims and related paperwork.
2. Contacting the appropriate offices without delay to ensure that the beneficiary received death and retirement benefits, the officer's remaining paychecks and payment for remaining annual and compensatory time.
3. Gathering information on all benefit/funeral payments that are available to the family.
4. Notify other social and fraternal organizations of the death and to ensure that any and all entitlements are paid to the beneficiary.
5. Preparing a printout of the various benefits/funeral payments that are due to the family, listing named beneficiaries, contacts at various benefits offices, and when they can expect to receive payment.
6. Meeting with the surviving family a few days after the funeral to discuss the benefits they will receive. A copy of the prepared printout and any other related paperwork should be given to the family at this time.
7. Meeting again with the family in about three months and as often as necessary to make sure that they are receiving the benefits.
8. If there are surviving children from a previous marriage, the guardian of those children should also receive a printout of what benefits the child(ren) may be receiving.

**d. Continued support for the family:**

The Family Liaison Officer acts as a long-term liaison with the surviving family who ensures that close contact is maintained between the department and the survivors. If no court proceedings surround the circumstances of the officer's death, the Family Liaison Officer will relay all details of the incident to the family at the earliest opportunity. If criminal violations surround the death, the Family Liaison Officer will do the following:

1. Inform the family of all new developments prior to press release
2. Keep the family apprised of legal and parole proceedings
3. Introduce the family to Victim Advocates

4. Accompany the family at trial, if requested
5. Arrange for investigators to meet with the family at the earliest opportunity following the trial to answer all their questions

### **ASSISTANCE FOR AFFECTED OFFICERS**

Officers who were on the scene or who arrived moments after an officer was critically injured or killed should be relieved as quickly as possible.

Police witnesses and other officers who may have been emotionally affected by the serious injury or death of another officer shall attend a Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.

Notification shall be made to Employee Support Services for follow up.

### **PUBLIC AND MEDIA RELATIONS**

A command level officer or the public information officer will be designated to handle the media throughout this traumatic ordeal. In the event the family should decide to grant an interview, this officer, in conjunction with a representative from the District Attorney's Office would attend and offer to screen all questions presented to the family to guard against inappropriate questions or topics jeopardizing upcoming legal proceedings. The following should be considered when dealing with the media:

1. Any information pertaining to the officer's injury or death is confidential.
2. There should be no initial comments made by any member of the department.
3. Any further comments or conversations with the media shall be conducted by the Waltham Police Department Public Information Officer or a commanding officer as designated by the Chief of Police.
4. All comments and conversations with the media shall be at the discretion of the Chief of Police or his designee.
5. Consider a media staging area.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

Any social media or City of Waltham website posts pertaining to a line of duty injury/death shall be approved by the Chief of Police in adherence to the Social Media Policy.