

Minnesota Emergency Medical Services

Line of Duty Death/ Serious Injury Handbook



This handbook is proudly dedicated to the everyday heroes who provide and support air and ground Emergency Medical Services (EMS) to their communities; the first responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, nurses and pilots.

This handbook is a guideline to assist your department in the event your agency suffers a serious injury/illness or death. We hope you never have to use this handbook, but we encourage you to look it over and adopt it for your department. Being prepared is an important part of what we do. If at any time during your planning stages you have questions please contact the Minnesota EMS Honor Guard.

Thank you to all of the people and agencies that contributed to this handbook.

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I. Introduction

This handbook is written to assist any EMS agency who must handle a line of duty death (LODD), serious injury/illness, non-line of duty death, and retired member death. While every EMS agency is different and many may have their own traditions as it relates to these incidents, it is important to handle these tragic occurrences with dignity, respect, confidentiality, and sensitivity. It is our hope that your department will adopt this handbook as standard practice. Throughout this document “EMT” is used to represent all levels of EMS providers including EMS dispatchers.

The MN EMS Honor Guard is designated to provide a dignified funeral service for active duty and retired EMTs.

II. Pre-Incident Planning

The pre-incident planning for line of duty death includes gathering information about your personnel, the development of standard operating procedure (SOP) and identifying resources.

A. Personal Information Packet

Personal information packets for all members of the agency should be prepared now. They should include such items as emergency contacts, photos, wishes/desires of the member and career historical information. Packets should be completed by members in consultation with their families, updated on a regular basis and kept sealed in their personnel file. (Refer to Appendix – Emergency Contact)

B. Standard Operating Procedures

SOPs should be developed to address such tasks as; notification practices, prepared media announcements, agency memorial and funeral procedures, personnel assignments and human resources needs.

C. Resources

Resources need to be identified, including uniforms, supplies, and equipment (e.g. mourning bands, bunting for the station and caisson, flags, etc.).

A list of outside resources, including local, state, and national related EMS support organizations should be prepared.

III. Initial Actions

An emotional and tense situation occurs at an incident with a death, probable death, or injuries severe enough that they will likely lead to death of an EMT. Actions need to be taken to control the situation and to prepare for the events which will take place. (Refer to Appendix-LODD Checklist and Checklist for Critically Ill/Injured)

- A. ***Remember the rest of the incident.***
- B. Institute a radio discipline policy.
 - This should include limiting Social Media, texting, and e-mail.
- C. Assign a Public Information Officer (PIO).
 - Expect a major media event.
 - Use prepared scripts so that the release of information is concise and accurate.
 - Schedule press conferences.
- D. Begin notifications
 - EMT's family
 - Manager (or higher) and an additional representative from the agency should notify the family in person of death and facts related to the incident. Have an ambulance crew nearby but out of sight.
 - A family liaison should remain with and/or be available to the family and should be the conduit for all information to/from the family.
 - All agency personnel.
 - Elected officials.
 - Coroner for an autopsy.
- E. Initiate a thorough investigation into the incident with law enforcement leading.
 - Recover and secure all personal protective equipment.
 - Secure the scene-consider it a possible crime scene.
 - Establish an investigation team.
- F. Contact support agencies
 - Provide for CISM and grief counseling for the agency.
 - Neighboring EMS agencies, police, and fire departments.
 - County, city, and state authorities.
 - Company/agency senior management.
 - Insurance carrier

IV. Investigative Issues

A thorough investigation into the cause of the fatality should be conducted by law enforcement including the possibility of criminal activities. Legal representation may be required. A full autopsy should be conducted by the coroner. If you have a separate safety/risk team, contact them to determine whether they have an existing protocol to follow for the investigation.

- A. Secure the scene
- B. Law enforcement should conduct a thorough investigation if the event caused injury or death, since possible criminal activity may be involved. Follow local or state protocols if this is a medical death; the local law enforcement agency may conduct an investigation.
- C. Collect appropriate statements from the individuals. This is not intended to suppress the facts, but rather to suppress incorrect and unnecessary opinions. Stick only to the facts. If facts are not known, this should be clearly stated.
- D. Recover and secure all protective clothing and equipment.
- E. Maintain records – interviews, radio tapes, incident reports, photographs, and drawings.
- F. Have an autopsy performed. It is essential that steps be taken to ensure that the cause of death is accurately reported. (Required to receive Public Safety Officer Benefits (PSOB).
- G. Obtain at least six (6) certified copies of the autopsy report and death certificate. These copies may have to be requested by the family.
- H. Notify the PIO and monitor all media inquiries.

V. Post-Incident Issues

Assist the family in planning the funeral/memorial as they choose. This may include agency involvement, transportation, meals, childcare, etc. The agency or Honor Guard assigned Family Liaison Officer should be the interface between the family, the agency, and others.

Continue to inform agency members and officials of arrangements.

Solicit local law enforcement, fire departments, and other EMS agencies for support. This may include assistance with the investigation, traffic control during the funeral, and response area coverage for an extended period of time.

Monitor agency members closest to the incident to see how they are dealing with the loss. Provide for CISM and grief counseling for the agency as needed. Consideration may also have to be given to allow members time off to cope with the tragedy.

VI. Family Issues: How to Help the Family

A. At the Hospital or the Morgue – Assign an Agency Representative to Assist

- Offer to have a member of the agency drive the family to the hospital and stay for as long as necessary.
- Work with the hospital staff to secure a private room where the family can gather. This should be separate from the general waiting area if possible.
- If the EMT was badly injured or disfigured, help prepare the family for what they will see. Always allow family members to make the decision.
- Assist the family in dealing with hospital staff.
- Provide assistance to the family in making calls to relatives and close friends. Answer incoming calls for the family or get messages to them at the hospital.
- Work with the family to arrange a plan for dealing with the media. The family may wish to have a member of the agency speak for them.
- Have someone available to drive the family home from the hospital. Offer to help with continuing visits as much as resources allow. Offer to stay with the family at the house.
- Offer to assist with day-to-day tasks such as home maintenance, arranging for childcare, or bringing meals and other necessities to the family.

B. From Time of Death through the Funeral

- Work with the family in planning the funeral. Remember that the family's wishes should always come first. If they want a private funeral the agency may consider holding a separate memorial service, however, the family should still be consulted.
- If there are children in the family, consider creating a special role for them (be sure to ask before mentioning this to the children).
- Offer to assist with lodging or transportation for out of town relatives and friends.
- Offer to have a member of the agency stay with the family prior to the funeral. Consider rotating people as needed in order to maintain an agency presence with the family.

- Have someone available for tasks such as answering the phone, driving the family to the funeral home to make arrangements or running errands.
- Help coordinate household duties such as food preparation, cleaning and childcare. Do necessary maintenance such as mowing the grass or clearing the snow.
- If donations are collected for the family, set up a bank account to deposit these funds.
- Coordinate with local law enforcement officials to make routine checks of residence and neighborhood, including during the funeral.
- Assign an agency member to help the family set guidelines for dealing with the media.

When assisting the family with funeral arrangements remember that the family's wishes and religious preferences take precedence over agency traditions.

C. Ongoing Support

- Continue to talk with the family about your memories of the EMT. Most families want to hear about their loved one even if it is emotionally difficult.
- Remember that parents of a fallen EMT need support and contact just like spouses and children do.
- Consider setting up an award or other recognition named after the deceased and invite the family to attend the annual award ceremony.
- Consider creating some kind of tribute to the fallen EMT. This could be a local memorial, a video tribute, a scrapbook, or a scholarship in the EMT's name. Prepare a tribute that is fitting for your EMT and special to the family.
- Help with what the EMT used to do – yard work, fixing things around the house, attending children's sports and school events, etc.
- Only promise what you actually can do. Keep all your promises.
- Instead of saying, "call if you need anything" offer to help with specific tasks and then follow through. For instance, say "I would like to come over on Thursday to fix the fence."
- Take all steps necessary to secure benefits for the family. The process is often lengthy so keep the family involved.

- Continue to invite the family to agency events, but don't be disappointed if they don't always attend.
- Remember that some events, such as holidays and the anniversary of the date of death, may be especially difficult for the family. Even families who seem to be doing well may need extra support and contact during these times.
- Contact the family before releasing any information on investigations, incident reports, etc.
- Encourage the family to attend the National EMS Memorial Service Weekend and other local, state, and national tributes. Offer to help make travel arrangements and attend with them whenever possible.

VII. Notifications

A. Next of Kin

The importance of the next of kin notification cannot be over-emphasized. This process sets the tone for the difficult times the family will face. Sensitivity and compassion are important.

The name of the deceased EMT must never be released by the agency before the immediate family is notified. If you need to ask neighbors while trying to locate the family, do not inform neighbors of the death. If asked, reply that you need to find the family regarding a medical emergency and ask if they know where the family can be found.

Family notification should be made as quickly as possible to avoid the family receiving a notification from another outside party. The media may employ many efforts to seek out the name of the fallen EMT. Use all necessary measures to protect the next of kin from unwanted media exposure.

For this reason, a Notification Team needs to assemble rapidly. The team should consist of: highest agency manager, agency chaplain, clergy (family bishop, pastor, minister, etc.), Family Liaison Officer and an EMT friend of the family or close family friend. Check the EMT's Personal Information Packet for their wishes and/or recommendations.

If the fallen EMT's family lives far enough out of the area making the agency's notification impractical, an EMS agency (or law enforcement agency) in that area should be asked to make a timely notification.

In the event that the agency experiences the loss of more than one member, then multiple notification teams will need to be assembled and deployed.

Before arriving at the residence, verify the latest information, decide who will speak and what they will say. Because of the emotional circumstances involved be prepared for the family to strike out and blame the agency for their loss.

Steps to be taken at the residence:

- 1) It is recommended to have an ambulance crew on standby near the residence, but not in view, especially if there is a known medical problem with a family member.
- 2) At the door identify yourself and ask to come in. (Notification should take place in a private setting.)
- 3) When inside ensure you are notifying the right person.
- 4) It is important to put all of the known basic facts into one sentence. Make sure the message is absolutely clear and direct.
 - Begin with, "I have very bad news" or "I am very sorry to tell you." Let them know what happened, "Your husband/wife died responding to a call," or "John was killed in an ambulance crash." (Use the EMT's first name when appropriate.)
 - Allow the family to express their emotions. Do not try to talk them out of their grief. Also, since this is a very sad time, do not mask your own grief.
 - Provide only the facts you know, never speculate. Answer all questions honestly. If you cannot answer a question, find the correct answer.
 - Avoid the following phrases: a) "I know how you feel", b) "It was God's will", c) "Life will go on", d) "He would have wanted to go this way", e) "Be brave", f) "Passed away."
 - Ask if the agency can assist by notifying immediate family members (parents, brothers and sisters).
 - Never leave immediately after making the notification. Have at least one member of the agency stay with the family – preferably the Family Liaison Officer.
 - Ask the family if they wish to see the deceased EMT, even if the body is badly disfigured. People often have a need to see, touch and hold the deceased; otherwise they may be in denial. This is often very helpful in the family grief process. It gives a sense of finality.
 - If family members wish to see the EMT, arrangements need to be made rapidly for viewing. Sensitivity to the family is very important.

Provide the best possible environment and avoid delays that heighten the family's anxiety.

- Offer to transport the family to the location of the EMT and help prepare them for what they will see. It is highly recommended that the family not drive themselves. If the family insists on driving, a uniformed EMT should accompany them in the family vehicle. (NOTE: If family members arrive on the scene during on-going operations it is important to identify them and keep them out of the direct flow of operations, particularly if the body is still on the scene.)
- If you transport the family in an agency vehicle, advise dispatch that you are transporting the relatives and turn off your radio or switch to an alternate channel. Communicate by phone.
- If the agency's Family Liaison Officer is not present at the notification, the family should be given the contact information. If possible the Family Liaison should already be known by the family.
- Advise the family that the Family Liaison Officer will contact them to assist with the necessary arrangements.
- Advise the family of possible media calls. Unwanted media exposure will only add to the difficulty of the tragedy. Suggest that a friend of the family screen incoming calls. Offer to be the media spokesperson for the family.
- Assure the family that their wishes are important to the agency.
- Advise the family that an autopsy will be required and why it is necessary. (Required for PSOB Benefits)
- Ensure that the family understands that they do not have to make any immediate decisions regarding services, mortuary, wills, etc. The agency's Family Liaison Officer will be able to provide assistance.

B. Agency Members

It is very important that all members of the agency be notified of the death as soon as possible, including those off-duty and vacationing personnel. (Refer to Appendix– LODD Memo to Staff)

In the event of an on-duty death the external monitoring of radio frequencies may be extensive. Communications regarding notifications should be restricted to the telephone whenever possible. Agency personnel should not give out any information about the incident unless it is approved by the manager or PIO.

For a line of duty death, a message, prepared and/or approved by the manager, should be transmitted to personnel. (Refer to Appendix-LODD Sample Memo to Staff)

LODD Sample Announcement

It is with deep regret that announcement is made of the death of (certification, name) who lost his life in the line of duty while participating in operations on an EMS call (location, date and time).

For a death other than line of duty, an announcement should be transmitted to personnel.

Non-LODD Sample Announcement

It is with deep regret that announcement is made in the death of (name) on/at (date/time).

C. Media

The line of duty death of an EMT is fortunately a rare occurrence for agencies. When it does occur, the media as well as many others are interested in obtaining as much detailed information as possible. Every effort should be made to provide essential facts but the information provided should be done only after the next of kin has been notified. Care should be given so that information critical to an investigation of the incident is not compromised.

The PIO, with the approval of the manager, can arrange for news conferences, written news releases and interviews. Information provided during a news conference should be prepared in advance. A press kit should be prepared and may include biographical information, photograph and service information.

D. Others

Depending on the circumstances surrounding the incident, notification of the death of an EMT may also be given to:

- Local elected or governing officials
- Neighboring agencies

- Public Safety Officers Benefit Program (PSOB), 1-888-744-6513
- National EMS Memorial Service (NEMSMS), 1-877-230-3147
- Elected State and Federal senators and representatives.

VIII. Staff Assignments

In order to provide the best possible tribute to the fallen EMT, it is extremely important for the agency to organize an effective team to manage all of the related activities. The organizational structure that will become necessary to control and coordinate this effort can be patterned after the Incident Command Structure (ICS) that is utilized to manage major emergency incidents.

The manager should have overall responsibility for directing the activities. It is recommended that the manager assign the MN EMS Honor Guard the following responsibilities (sections A-E).

A. Funeral Coordinator (FC) (LODD Only)

Funeral Coordinator (FC) – The MN EMS Honor Guard will assume the duties of Funeral Coordinator, who is the overall coordinator for the agency's involvement in the planning and participation in the funeral. This person needs to be able to effectively communicate with the manager, funeral team members, agency members and the public. The FC may have these additional duties:

1. Conduct coordination meetings with key personnel as needed.
2. Assure notification of all off-duty and vacationing personnel.
3. Arrange to have flags lowered to half-staff. (Per U.S. Flag Code)
4. Make appropriate follow-up contacts when the funeral arrangements have been made.
5. Personally collect all of the deceased personal items from the station and forward them to the Family Liaison Officer.
6. Become the contact person for outside agencies.
7. Make appropriate arrangements for a post funeral meal/reception.
8. Contact support agencies, as appropriate, to arrange for their assistance.

9. Contact appropriate agency personnel to arrange for finalization of paperwork, forms, etc.
10. Contact neighboring agencies for purpose of area coverage during the funeral.
11. Contact law enforcement and other agencies for assistance during the funeral.

B. Family Liaison Officer (FLO)

The FLO is the primary agency connection with the family, the conduit for all information flow to/from the family. The FLO should be assigned an agency vehicle for the entire funeral process and should be available to the family 24-hours a day by phone or pager.

The FLO should be prepared to discuss all parameters of the funeral process and ceremonies and to assist the family in its decisions. These may include but are not limited to: the internment, wake, funeral home, religious service, cemetery, burial garment (uniform or other), music, eulogy, procession, reception, child/family care. The FLO needs to know what services the agency can and cannot provide.

The Family Liaison Officer also needs to work with the family to obtain necessary documentation – autopsy reports, birth and death certificates, marriage certificates, military records and insurance documents. The FLO can assist in obtaining the benefits due the family such as:

1. Public Safety Officers Benefits
2. Pension/retirement systems
3. Local insurance benefits
4. Workers' compensation
5. Social security
6. Veterans benefits
7. Union or state EMS related organizations
8. State/Federal education benefits
9. Other local, state or regional organizations

C. Public Information Officer (PIO)

The Public Information Officer should coordinate and disseminate, with the approval of the manager, all information regarding the line of duty death. The release of names of injured or deceased EMTs should never be done prior to the notification of the next of kin. The PIO's responsibilities may include:

1. Coordination and/or presentation of all media contacts including interviews, news conferences and written news releases.
2. Coordinate the notification of:
 - a. Local public officials
 - b. State EMS organization
 - c. Neighboring agencies
 - d. National EMS Memorial Service (www.NEMSMS.org)
 - e. State and Federal elected officials
 - f. Other related state and local organizations
3. Establish information telephone numbers – recorded or live.
4. Prepare press kits – biographical information, pictures, service information, maps, etc.
5. Organize media coverage. Use media pool coverage to limit and manage media areas at the service and burial.
6. Prepare printed service programs for viewing, funeral and burial.
7. Manage VIP arrangements.

C. Church Coordinator (MN EMS Honor Guard)

The Church Coordinator assists with all phases of the funeral and/or memorial services. This person works closely with the Family Liaison Officer to ensure that the needs and desires of the family are being met. Duties may include:

1. Working with the funeral home director to ensure that the family is taken care of appropriately in the planning of the funeral.

2. Determine whether agency vehicles will be used as a funeral coach, family transportation and for the processional.
3. Coordinate with the honor guard.
4. Obtaining and delivering to the funeral home director burial clothing from the family or from the agency.
5. Coordinates any formal walk-through of uniformed personnel during the period of viewing.
6. Assists in coordinating the funeral service such as prayers, readings, music and eulogies.
7. Assists with arrival and seating of agency members, visiting agencies, dignitaries, friends and family.

D. Procession Coordinator

It is the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to coordinate the procession from the funeral service to the cemetery. Duties may include:

1. Coordinating with other agencies that will be involved with the procession.
2. The cleaning and preparing of agency vehicles.
3. Establishing staging areas for vehicles and apparatus at the funeral service and at the cemetery.
4. Contacting and working with law enforcement in setting up traffic control, directing traffic and assisting in the staging area.
5. Determining and placing the procession vehicles in order.
6. Determining the route of the procession, how long the procession will be and if the procession will pass in front of the EMS station or other special location.
7. Providing maps and directions to the service.
8. Assigning personnel to assist in parking cars as well as setting up personal vehicles for the processional.
9. During a walking procession directing individuals into proper placement.

E. Cemetery Coordinator (MN EMS Honor Guard)

The Cemetery Coordinator is responsible for the events at the cemetery from the time the processional arrives until the end of the service and everyone has left the cemetery. This person works with the Family Liaison Officer and the funeral home director in determining how the grave side service is put together. Duties may include:

1. Ensuring the proper placement and formation of agency members, honor and color guards, bugler, pipers, drummers, firing squads, visiting agencies, friends and others.
2. Coordinating with the cemetery the overhead protection for the immediate family, public address system, parking, staging and security.
3. Coordinating medical stand-by personnel at the cemetery.
4. If a flag is going to be presented to the family, coordinating the presentation with the agency or other personnel involved.
5. Providing any details or instructions regarding post-funeral gatherings.

F. Pallbearers

Pallbearers are chosen by the family (usually six to eight individuals) to “bear the body of the deceased.” Their duties may include passing the casket from the chapel to the funeral coach and then from the vehicle to the grave side. If the agency vehicle is used as a caisson to carry the casket the pallbearers from the agency may be assigned to drive and/or ride on the vehicle from the beginning to the end of the funeral procession.

IX. Funeral Considerations

Decisions regarding the funeral are the responsibility of the family. However, consideration should be given to the individual's wishes, if he/she communicated those wishes before his/her death (Personal Information Packet); the family's religious customs and EMS service traditions.

The honors and support provided by the agency may be affected by circumstances surrounding the death, established agency protocol and the classification (type) of death.

A. Classifications

Type I: Death Occurs to an EMT as a result of an on-duty incident or job related illness.

Type II: Death occurs when an active EMT is off-duty and not related to any emergency activities.

Type III: Death pertains to a retired EMT of the agency. To be eligible for a Type III funeral: The member must have at least 10 years of cumulative EMS service, unless medically retired with at least 5 years of cumulative EMS service.

Mutual Aid should be requested in an attempt to allow all personnel to attend Type I and Type II funerals. For Type III funerals agency should request junior employees to come in (for overtime if available) to cover shifts for senior members who wish to attend the funeral and mutual aid should only be requested at agency discretion.

Policy Standard for Funerals

Listed below are the different elements of funerals with which the Agency/MN EMS Honor guard will offer to the family. The Family Liaison Officer should coordinate the arrangements with the family. The most important item in any situation is that prior approval of any funeral element must be given by the family of the deceased. Under no circumstances should assumptions be made.

Funeral Policy Standards

Standard	Type I	Type II	Type III
American Flag Presentation	x	x	x
Mourning Bands	x	x	x
Bagpipers/drums	x		
Bugler/TAPS	x		
Casket Flag	x	PF	PF
Agency/Union Eulogies	x	x	x
Last Radio Call	x		
Honor Guards	x	x	x
Sea of Blue	x	x	x
Active Member Pallbearers	x		
Station Bunting	x		
Vehicle Bunting	x		
Caisson	x	x	x
Aircare Fly Over	x		
Vigil Stander/ Body Escort	x		
Casket Detail	x		
Display Colors	x		
EMS Prayer	x	x	x
Badge Presentation	x	AP	AP
Riffle Volley	x		
Crossed Ladder Trucks	x		
PF= Pre-folded			
AP= Optional Agency Presentation			

* - To be eligible for a Type III funeral:
The member must have at least 10 years of cumulative EMS service,
unless medically retired with at least 5 years of cumulative EMS service.

****Respect the desires of the family****

B. Guidelines for the Funeral/Memorial Service

Type I Service

1. All available personnel requested to attend in Class A or Class B uniform including off-duty members. (Refer to Appendix – Uniform Classifications)
2. All members will wear black mourning band per policy. (Refer to Appendix – Mourning Band Policy).
3. All agency flags will fly at half-staff from the time the death is announced until at least 24 hours after the service and up to one week after the death.
4. All regular uniformed personnel will remain covered (with class A hat) while outdoors, except during prayers, and uncovered indoors.
5. All honor guard members will be covered at all times during the performance of their duties.
6. Seating will be reserved so that the family is nearest the casket followed by the pallbearers, the agency officers (descending in rank), followed by all other members of the home agency. Following that will be all visiting uniformed EMTs. The city mayor, council members and other dignitaries will be seated either to the side of all EMTs, or directly behind the home agency.
7. Upon conclusion of the service all uniformed personnel, excluding the pallbearers, will file out to assemble outside in preparation of the passing of the casket.
8. The casket will precede the family through the assembled EMTs to the funeral coach.
9. The pallbearers will then place the casket on the funeral coach.

Type II Service

1. All available agency personnel requested to attend in Class A or Class B uniform. (Refer to Appendix – Uniform Classifications)
2. All members will wear black mourning band per policy. (Refer to Appendix – Mourning Band Policy)
3. All agency flags will fly at half-staff from the time of the death is announced until at least 24 hours after the service and up to one week after death.
4. All regular uniformed personnel will remain covered (class A hat) while outdoors, except during prayers and uncovered indoors.

5. All honor guard members will be covered at all times during the performance of their duties.
6. Seating will be reserved so that the family is nearest the casket followed by the pallbearers, any agency officers who wish to attend, followed by all other members of the agency. Following that will be any visiting uniformed EMTs. Any dignitaries will be seated either to the side of all EMTs, or directly behind them.
7. Upon conclusion of the service all uniformed personnel, excluding the pallbearers, will file out to assemble outside in preparation of the passing of the casket.
8. The casket will precede the family through the assembled EMTs to the funeral coach.
9. The pallbearers will then place the casket in the funeral coach.

Type III Service

1. All available agency personnel requested to attend in Class A or Class B uniform. (Refer to Appendix – Uniform Classifications)
2. All members will wear black mourning band per policy. (Refer to Appendix – Mourning Band Policy)
3. All regular uniformed personnel will remain covered (class A hat) while outdoors, except during prayers and uncovered indoors.
4. All honor guard members will be covered at all times during the performance of their duties.
5. Seating will be reserved so that the family is nearest the casket followed by the pallbearers, any agency officers who wish to attend, followed by all other members of the agency. Following that will be any visiting uniformed EMTs. Any dignitaries will be seated either to the side of all EMTs, or directly behind them.
6. Upon conclusion of the service all uniformed personnel, excluding the pallbearers, will file out to assemble outside in preparation of the passing of the casket.
7. The casket will precede the family through the assembled EMTs to the funeral coach.
8. The pallbearers will then place the casket in the funeral coach.

C. Guidelines for Processional to and Assembly at Graveside

Type I

Note: There are two options for proceeding to the graveside – marching and vehicle procession.

Marching Processional

It is the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the marching processional is appropriate and that the bugler is standing by at the cemetery.

- Piper(s) and drummer(s)
- Color guard
- Clergy/agency chaplain
- Funeral coach will pallbearers and honor guard escort
- Immediate family
- Agency officers in descending order of rank and dignitaries
- Home agency uniformed personnel
- Visiting agency uniformed personnel
- Home agency vehicles
- Visiting agency vehicles
- All other miscellaneous vehicles

Vehicle Procession Only

It is again the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the vehicular processional is appropriate and that piper(s), drummer(s), bugler and color guard are standing by at the cemetery.

- Lead car provided by funeral home, containing appropriate clergy/agency chaplain
- Funeral coach with pallbearers
- Car/limousine/bus with immediate family
- Agency car followed by officer cars and dignitary cars
- Additional home agency vehicles
- Visiting agency vehicles

Assembly at Graveside

- The piper(s) and drummer(s) will be assembled approximately 100 yards from the gravesite; the bugler will assemble approximately 20 feet past the gravesite.
- Walk of Honor – the members of the home agency shall line up on both sides of the path, in an organized fashion from the funeral coach to the graveside with all additional home agency EMTs and visiting agency EMTs lining up behind the front row of EMTs.
- Once the EMTs are appropriately assembled the color guard will line up at the beginning of the Walk of Honor followed by the clergy.
- At this point the pallbearers will remove the casket from the funeral coach and the honor guard will command “Attention.” All EMTs will then come to attention, awaiting the command “Present arms” which will signal the pallbearers to begin carrying the casket down the Walk of Honor and all EMTs will render a hand salute as the casket nears them.
- The casket will be followed in order by the immediate family, the agency officials in descending rank and other dignitaries.
- Once the casket reaches the gravesite the piper(s) and drummer(s) may begin playing ‘Amazing Grace’ as they approach from the distance, marching to approximately 20 feet from the foot end of the graveside.
- After the piper(s) and drummer(s) reach their appropriate places, the command “Order arms, fall in” will be given, instructing the EMTs to move from their places in the Walk of Honor, to orderly lines directly behind (or across from) the family who are to be seated directly in front of the casket.
- The appropriate clergy then should step forward with the graveside message depending upon the wishes of the family.
- At the close of the graveside message the clergy may then commence with “Let us now pray.” At this time all are expected to remove and order their covers to their sides and bow their heads in respect.
- Once the clergy has finished the prayer all personnel will recover, the honor guard will remove the flag from the casket (if used) and fold it for presentation to the family.
- The flag will be passed from one member of the honor guard to the honor guard commander with members of the honor guard saluting as it passes.

- The presentation to the next of kin will be made by the agency manager who will present it as he/she explains,

Sample

“This flag is presented on behalf of a grateful (city, township, county, etc.), as a small token of our appreciation for the honorable and faithful service, and great sacrifice of your loved one.”

It is appropriate to use the deceased’s name when presenting the flag and a personal message to the family to show your gratitude for their sacrifice.

- It is then appropriate for a dispatcher to announce this farewell message.

Sample

“The members of the (agency) wish to thank (certification and name) for his/her (# years) of services to the citizens of this (city, township, county, etc.) of (name). Although you are gone, you will never be forgotten.”

- Rifle Volley
- At the conclusion the honor guard commander will command “Attention, present arms” and the bugler will begin to play ‘Taps.’
- At the conclusion of ‘Taps’ the command “Order arms” will be rendered and the EMTs will stand at attention until the family has begun to depart.
- Information about the reception or other family desires may be announced.
- At this point the honor guard commander will command, “Dismissed” concluding the services.

Type II

Procession

It is again the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the vehicular procession is appropriate.

- Lead car provided by funeral home, containing appropriate clergy.
- Funeral coach with pallbearers
- Car or limousine with immediate family
- Agency vehicles
- All other agency personnel
- All other vehicles

Assembly at Graveside

- The pallbearers will remove the casket from the funeral coach and begin carrying the casket to the graveside.
- The casket will be followed in order by the immediate family and present EMTs.
- The appropriate clergy then should step forward with the graveside message, depending upon the wishes of the family.
- At close of the graveside message the clergy may then commence with "Let us now pray." At this time, all are expected to remove and order their covers to their sides and bow their heads in respect.
- Once the clergy has finished the prayer all personnel will recover.
- At this point the services are concluded.
- Information about the reception or other family desires may be announced.

Type III

Procession

It is again the responsibility of the Procession Coordinator to ensure that the order for the vehicular procession is appropriate.

- Lead car provided by funeral home, containing appropriate clergy.
- Funeral coach with pallbearers
- Car or limousine with immediate family
- Agency vehicles
- All other agency personnel
- All other vehicles

Assembly at Graveside

- The pallbearers will remove the casket from the funeral coach and begin carrying the casket to the graveside.
- The casket will be followed in order by the immediate family and present EMTs.
- The appropriate clergy then should step forward with the graveside message, depending upon the wishes of the family.
- At close of the graveside message the clergy may then commence with "Let us now pray." At this time, all are expected to remove and order their covers to their sides and bow their heads in respect.
- Once the clergy has finished the prayer all personnel will recover.
- At this point the services are concluded.
- Information about the reception or other family desires may be announced.

D. Viewing/Vigil Considerations (Type I only)

The family may desire to have a time for a viewing or vigil. The agency should coordinate its participation with the Family Liaison Officer. Often the family will request an honor guard be posted at each end of the casket. It is generally proper protocol for the honor guards to wear their uniform hat inside the church or mortuary, including the time spent posted alongside the casket. Gloves should also be worn. It would be acceptable for immediate family members to be escorted by agency personnel to and from the viewing. It may be helpful to have members of the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team available for counseling.

E. Memorial Service Logistics

There are a number of issues regarding the memorial service that should be taken into consideration:

1. Ensure the facility is large enough to handle the anticipated numbers. You may have to plan for overflow.
2. The agency may need to coordinate traffic control and parking with other agencies.
3. Work with the family in establishing the program and obtaining speakers for the service.
4. Assist with the printing and distribution of a written program.
5. Coordinate seating arrangements for the family, VIP's, agency personnel, visiting agencies, officials and friends.
6. Arrange for an adequate PA system.
7. If services are held outside, arrangements may be required for a tent, chairs, restrooms, water, stage, power, etc.
8. Rehearsals may be needed for key personnel.

F. Recommended Presentation Order for Memorial Service

1. Invocation
2. Prayer
3. Opening remarks/greetings
4. Special music
5. Scripture reading/clergy remarks
6. Speakers
 - a. Mayor
 - b. Local elected official from district
 - c. State or Federal officials
 - d. Family representative(s)
 - e. Agency representative
 - f. Union representative
7. Eulogy – manager or person requested by family
8. Special music
9. Presentations
10. Closing remarks/prayer
11. Bagpipes
12. Dismissal instructions

G. Suggested Presentation of the Emblem

The manager may present the deceased members badge to the family.

(Name of nearest of kin) it is an honor that I have the privilege presenting to you an emblem of the (agency) of which our late brother/sister was a member; his/her emblem symbolizes the esteem we held for him/her. May the memory therefore always bring happiness.

H. Recommended Program for Internment (Type I)

1. Assembly
2. "Uniformed Personnel attention, present arms, order arms" (order arms command given when casket is placed over the grave)
3. Opening prayer
4. Scripture reading
5. Bagpiper
6. Committal reading, closing prayer
7. Rifle Volleys
8. Taps
9. Flag folding
10. Flag presentation by manager
11. Reception/family announcements
12. "Uniformed Personnel attention, dismissed"

I. Reception Logistics

It is often the agency's responsibility to assist the family to provide food and refreshments at a reception at the conclusion of the burial service. This will probably take place at a location away from the cemetery. The Funeral Coordinator should assign an individual to coordinate the activity. The following should be taken into consideration:

1. Location site – ensure site is suitable in size with adequate parking
2. Maps to be passed out at the cemetery
3. Number of anticipated attendees
4. Anticipated starting/closing times
5. Menu and refreshments (provided by agency or catered)
6. Tableware and seating
7. If outside, tents, restrooms, seating
8. If speakers/program, PA and stage
9. Relocation of flowers
10. Agency provided transportation for individuals.

J. Setting Up Memorials

Paying tribute to the fallen EMT is honorable and should be done. Setting up a memorial can also help with the healing process of the family and the agency. Permission should be obtained from family member before setting up the memorial.

There are several ways a memorial can be made – erecting a permanent memorial marker; establishing a trust or scholarship fund (check with the bank for the proper type of account); annual agency memorial service; attendance or contribution in the name of honoree to yearly National EMS Memorial Service.

When an EMS service sets up a memorial fund, it might be easier to set up a savings account in the name of the EMS agency for “(name of deceased) Memorial Fund.” If a trust fund is set up there are more difficult tax liabilities and other problems that may be encountered.

X. Survivors Benefits

The death of an EMT is often a difficult time for the entire agency. Many details and arrangements need to be addressed in a short period of time. One major item which is sometimes overlooked is the identification and completion of the various claim forms that are required to assure the deceased member’s family receives the benefits available to them. The MN EMS Honor Guard should take the responsibility for seeing that this is carried out. The benefits available can vary as a result of the circumstances surrounding the cause of death, whether the EMT was a volunteer or paid, prior affiliations and places of employment and locally established benefit options. The agency should research and prepare a listing of the potential benefits available to its members.

A. Federal Benefits

Public Safety Officers’ Benefit Program

The PSOB Program provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of public safety officers whose deaths, or permanent and total disability, are the direct and proximate result of a traumatic injury, heart attack or stroke sustained in the line of duty. The total benefit amount is adjusted annually on October 1. The benefit is adjusted by the percentage of change in the Consumer Price Index.

Following the death of an EMT the agency needs to identify an agency liaison with the PSOB Program. The liaison then needs to:

1. Call the PSOB at 1-888-744-6513 (leave a message and be sure to include all of the required information).
2. Provide accurate up to date information including:
 - Agency name and address

- Liaison's name
- Phone number for the agency and liaison
- An email address, fax number or mailing address so the PSOB can send the death benefits questionnaire
- Deceased EMT's name
- Date of the incident and death
- A brief description of the incident

The MN EMS Honor Guard liaison must complete and return the questionnaire to PSOB immediately. This information is vital. In describing the incident, as much detail as possible should be given; however, do not speculate if the cause of death is not known.

The PSOB will send an information package with a form (Report of Public Safety Officer's Death) that the agency must complete and a form (Claim for Death Benefit) that the survivors must complete and sign. With the form the family submits, several original documents will need to be attached (e.g., birth certificate, marriage license, divorce decree, etc.). PSOB will not return items unless specifically requested.

Upon verification of the claim the PSOB will notify the next-of-kin of the status of the claim. The agency liaison should be available to provide assistance to the family.

B. Agency of Veterans Affairs

The Agency of Veterans Affairs may be able to provide family assistance for veterans in obtaining a burial site, marker and flag. Contact the VA 1-800-827-1000.

C. Social Security Administrations

Depending on the work history of the deceased EMT and their participation in the Social Security program, his/her family may be eligible for benefits provided by the Social Security Administration (SSA). Assistance can be obtained from regional SSA offices or at www.ssa.gov.

If eligible, survivor benefits may include:

- A one-time lump-sum payment is payable to the surviving spouse provided the deceased employee and the spouse were living together at the time of death, or the surviving spouse is entitled to survivor benefits. If there is no surviving spouse, the lump sum is paid to children who are eligible for benefits. Otherwise, the lump sum is not payable.
- Social Security will pay survivor benefits to a surviving spouse and dependent children. For the spouse to qualify, he/she must be at least age 60, or between the ages of 50 and 59 and disabled, or any age and caring for a child under the age of 16 or a disabled child. Children may qualify for benefits if they are under age 18 (or under age 19, if in high school) or disabled. Dependent parents and former spouses may also qualify for survivor benefits. The amount of the benefit depends on the deceased employee's Social Security earnings and the number of survivors eligible for benefits.

D. State Benefits

The MN EMS Honor Guard will investigate what state and local benefits are available.

E. Local Benefits

Survivor benefits vary greatly by locality. The deceased EMT's own agency may have available benefits and/or scholarships. The agency should prepare a potential source list now. Items that could be included are: life insurance policy, accidental death policy, deferred compensation program and civic and EMS related organizations. A special fund or trust may also be set up for the family.

XI. Guidelines for Death of Support Staff Member (Non-Field)

- If a call comes in requesting next of kin information from the police or the coroner's office, the call should be directed to Human Resources (HR). HR will then give home address and/or emergency contact information. HR will not notify the department leader until the employee's family has been informed.
- After learning of the death of an employee, the leader of the department should notify HR (if HR has not notified the leader) and then hold an all team department meeting to inform co-workers.
 - Have counseling available and discuss the program
 - Share visitation/funeral details if available
- HR should call the family for any needed information and to share sympathies. HR should be the point of contact for the deceased family.
 - Needed Information:
 - Contact information for benefits
 - Funeral information
 - Additional information needed for memo to workforce
 - Where to send last check, personal items, etc.
- HR and/or supervisor notifies communications team or administrative support to create a memo to send to entire worksite from site/department leader.
 - Include next of kin information, visitation and funeral times (if available)
- Discuss with payroll the most appropriate way to distribute last paycheck, take employee's name out of system, contact any life insurance company for claims processing for family.
- If necessary, HR should contact the benefits team to set up a counselor to come in a day or two after the news of the death is shared.
 - Once the counselor arrives have another team meeting together.
 - Team meetings are optional as some may not want to share feelings or participate.
- Manager should share next steps (filling position with a temp assignment or posting to hiring for position, clearing desk time, etc.) and funeral information if haven't done so.

- HR and/or supervisor should clear the former employee's desk a few days after death. If possible, do so at the end of the work week and/or after hours. Notify the department team members in case they would like to ensure they are away from the desk at that time or would like to help.
- HR and/or supervisor collect cards from co-workers to mail to the family and/or help create a memory book to present to the family.
- Flowers should be sent on behalf of the company/group.
- If the employee signed up for electronic W-2, then the W-2 will not be automatically sent to the family in January. HR will need to contact payroll to have the W-2 sent.

A. Funeral Considerations

The agency can consider providing a Type III funeral (minus the presentation of an American flag) for support staff if it is what the family wants. It will be the sole responsibility of the agency to provide this service.

National EMS Memorial Service
2910 N. Powers Blvd. #119
Colorado Springs, Colorado 80922
www.nemsms.org
1-877-230-3147

American Ambulance Association
8400 Westpark Drive Second Floor
McLean, Virginia 22102
www.the-aaa.org

Minnesota EMS Honor Guard
2800 N. 7th St, P.O. box 823
St. Cloud, MN 56302
www.mnemshonorguard.org

Appendix

