

Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigations

320.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for investigating a serious injury or line-of-duty death, documenting of the events leading to the injury or death and making recommendations directed toward preventing similar occurrences in the future.

320.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Blue Ridge Fire District to identify the causal factors pertaining to any event involving a serious injury or line-of-duty death, and to document and secure evidence which may be a factor in any regulatory actions or litigation resulting from the event. An investigation into the circumstances of the serious injury or line-of-duty death is separate and distinct from any investigation being conducted regarding the cause of a fire.

The District may utilize external resources to assist or lead the investigation. These resources include:

- The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT)
- The Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health (ADOSH)
- Local law enforcement
- Area fire department Fire Marshals

In the event an investigation utilizes multiple agencies, the District will establish a Unified Incident Command program to facilitate the needs and activities of the investigation.

320.3 PROCEDURE

As soon as practicable after a serious injury or line-of-duty death has occurred, the Fire Chief or the authorized designee shall assign an investigation team to conduct an investigation into the circumstances of the event.

- (a) A Chief level officer should function as the team leader and direct the investigation of the line-of-duty death or serious injury. The investigation team should report to the team leader, who is responsible for the management of the investigative process.
- (b) All members of the Blue Ridge Fire District shall give their full and complete cooperation to the investigation team.
- (c) ADOSH will conduct an investigation of incidents involving the death of an employee.
- (d) The Blue Ridge Fire District should cooperate with all other government agencies that have a legal cause to be involved in the investigation of a line-of-duty death or serious injury and should voluntarily share relevant information with other organizations working in areas of fire service occupational safety and health education and training. Participation by these agencies shall be at their own discretion, depending on the

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circumstances of the incident. These agencies may or may not produce their own reports of the incident with recommendations for corrective actions. These reports do not supersede the investigation team report.

- (e) The investigation team report and all related documentation shall be an internal Blue Ridge Fire District administrative report.
- (f) Any public release of the report requires the approval of the Fire Chief or the authorized designee. Such release will generally be processed in accordance with the provisions of the Arizona Public Records Law (ARS § 39-121 et seq.).

320.4 INVESTIGATION TEAM

The investigation team shall consist, at a minimum, of the following team members:

- (a) Captain
- (b) Chief Officer

Additional personnel may be added as required by the specific circumstances of the incident, including an investigative representative from the appropriate law enforcement agency when there is reasonable cause to believe a crime may be connected with the investigation.

320.4.1 DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The duties of the investigation team include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (a) Gather and analyze all physical evidence related to the incident.
- (b) Interview all witnesses with direct or indirect knowledge of the circumstances. When interviewing members of the District, represented members shall have the right to have their labor representatives present pursuant to the applicable collective bargaining agreement.
- (c) Collect and preserve recordings and copies of radio traffic, telephone conversations, photographs, film, videotape, incident histories and other related information. The pertinent aspects of the radio and telephone recordings should be transcribed.
- (d) Consult with persons having special knowledge of the factors involved in the incident, including private sector experts and consultants.
- (e) Connect with other agencies involved in the investigation of the incident.
- (f) Establish and maintain ongoing communication between the team leader and the legal counsel for the District.
- (g) Develop a written report of the incident, including conclusions and recommendations.
- (h) Coordinate activities with Fire Prevention to avoid interference with any criminal investigation.
- (i) Ensure that a post-mortem examination is conducted on any member who dies as a result of the incident as well as on any other deceased person who may have been contributory to the event.

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- (j) Activate the District or regional Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) team for any members adversely affected by the incident.

320.4.2 DOCUMENTATION

The investigation team should ensure that the scene where the line-of-duty death or serious injury occurred is documented, including diagrams, photographs and observations. When feasible, all witness interviews should be recorded or transcribed. When recording or transcription is not feasible, the investigator's notes of the interview should be preserved. In addition, the investigation team should:

- (a) Obtain, examine and secure all personal protective equipment (PPE), breathing apparatus and equipment used by the seriously injured or deceased employee.
 1. A complete physical description of the PPE, breathing apparatus and equipment shall be included in the report of the incident.
 2. A performance evaluation report conducted by a qualified professional on all safety equipment should be included in the report of the incident.
 3. For specific guidance on PPE involved in the incident, refer to the special incident procedure in the Personal Protective Equipment Policy.
- (b) Review and comment on the application of policies and procedures to the incident, the observance of policies and procedures and their effect on the situation. Recommend changes, additions or deletions to such policies and procedures.
- (c) Attempt to obtain any photographs, videotape or other information relating to the incident from news media or other sources. Such evidence should be obtained with the agreement that it will only be used for investigative and educational purposes.

320.5 FINAL REPORT

The investigation team should present the final report to the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief should determine the schedule and method of presentation of the final report.