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# Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification

## 1036.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to describe the communication activities that should occur in the event a member is seriously injured or killed in the line of duty. The policy establishes a priority for notifications, outlines steps for conducting each set of notifications and identifies roles and responsibilities.

## 1036.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the Blue Ridge Fire District to ensure, to the extent reasonably practicable, that immediate and compassionate notification is made to the family of members who are seriously injured, hospitalized or killed in the line of duty. The District shall make it a priority to offer assistance and support to the member's family.

## 1036.3 PROCEDURE

- (a) For the purposes of this policy, a serious injury or hospitalization is defined as a medical condition that is life-threatening or has the potential to disable the member for a substantial period of time, including inpatient hospitalization, amputation and loss of an eye.
- (b) The Incident Commander (IC) or Captain at the scene of the serious injury or death will immediately notify the Fire Chief and provide the necessary information.
- (c) The Fire Chief will be the point of contact for making assignments and will coordinate actions with the Fire Chief and others.
- (d) All inquiries related to the incident should be referred to the Fire Chief.
- (e) In the event of the death of a member, the Captain must immediately initiate the procedures in the Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Investigations Policy.

## 1036.4 DEATH NOTIFICATIONS

The Fire Chief will assign a two-person notification team consisting of either a Captain and district chaplain or two Captains to locate and inform the member's family. If more than one member has been seriously injured or killed in an incident, separate teams will be assigned to each affected family. The team should:

- (a) Contact the Administration Division to obtain information regarding the member's next of kin.
- (b) Call back operations staff, if necessary.

## *Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification*

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### 1036.4.1 NOTIFICATION TEAM RESPONSE

The notification team shall make the necessary family notification as quickly as practicable, with the goal of making the notification within two hours of the Captain learning of the serious injury or death. The following should be considered when planning the notification:

### 1036.4.2 NOTIFYING THE FAMILY

The team members should adhere to the following notification guidelines:

- (a) The team should not park directly in front of the family's home or workplace. The person who will make the notification should make introductions at the door and ask to be invited in.
- (b) In most cases, if a chaplain is part of the notification team, he/she should make the notification.
- (c) Notification should be made briefly and directly.
- (d) Information regarding precipitating factors or information that is not verified should not be provided until an investigation has been completed.
- (e) Team members should communicate the support and sympathy of the Fire Chief and all members of the District.
- (f) Team members should ask family members whether they would like the team to notify other parties, such as clergy or grief counselors.

### 1036.4.3 NOTIFICATION OF FAMILY OUT OF THE AREA

If the immediate next of kin of the deceased employee lives more than two hours away, the Captain may make arrangements to have someone in the family's area make the notification. The following should be considered:

- (a) Whether the notification should be made by the local clergy or another person in the area who has a relationship with the family or with the assistance of the local fire department/law enforcement.
- (b) Whether the fire department in the family's city of residence may be the most appropriate entity to make the notification or whether that department can assist in obtaining information about the family.
- (c) Whoever is selected to make the notification should be provided with the information contained in this policy.
- (d) The notification plan must include a coordinated telephone call with the family and the Fire Chief.

### 1036.4.4 INTERNAL DISTRICT NOTIFICATIONS

The following internal notifications should be made in advance of any media release:

- (a) All on-duty Captains should be notified.



## *Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification*

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- (b) All members should be notified as soon as possible after the family notification is made.

### **1036.4.5 GOVERNING BODY AND LABOR NOTIFICATIONS**

The Fire Chief will ensure that additional notifications are made as required, after the next-of-kin notification. Notifications that are required as soon as practicable after a confirmed line-of-duty death or serious injury include the following:

- (a) Elected officials or board of directors
- (b) Employees
- (c) District Health and Safety Officer, who will make the necessary notifications in coordination with the Captain
- (d) Other notifications as determined by the Fire Chief

### **1036.4.6 EXTERNAL NOTIFICATIONS**

The following external notifications will be made:

- (a) Notification to the Arizona Office of the State Fire Marshal
- (b) Notification to the Arizona Division of Occupational Safety and Health (ADOSH) of work-related fatalities within eight hours and serious injuries including all inpatient hospitalizations, amputations and losses of an eye within 24 hours
- (c) Notification to the Arizona Local Assistance State Team (AZ L.A.S.T.)
- (d) Notification to the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- (e) Notification to the U.S. Department of Justice Public Safety Officers' Benefit Program
- (f) Notification to the United States Fire Administration (USFA)
- (g) Notification to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (NFFF)
- (h) Notification to other agencies as mandated by federal and state law and local ordinance

### **1036.5 FAMILY SUPPORT**

The Fire Chief should appoint a Family Support Liaison, who should refer to the Family Support Liaison Policy for duties and responsibilities.

In the event of a line-of-duty death, the Fire Chief or the authorized designee should appoint a funeral detail officer to administer the Funerals Policy.

### **1036.6 NEWS MEDIA AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

It is the policy of the Blue Ridge Fire District to follow the News Media and Community Relations Policy when communicating with the media. In the case of a line-of-duty death, additional considerations include, but are not limited to:

- (a) The employee's family must have received proper notification prior to any information regarding the identity of the deceased being released to the media.

## *Line-of-Duty Death and Serious Injury Notification*

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- (b) All information must be validated prior to its release to the media.

The PIO or the authorized designee shall be the spokesperson on most aspects of these events. However, the announcement or confirmation of a line-of-duty death and/or the release of the employee's name should be made by the Fire Chief or the authorized designee.

Prior to confirmation that the employee's family has been notified, no details will be released concerning the death. If the news media is on-scene and are aware of the death, the PIO will simply confirm that a death has occurred and communicate the district's compassion and concern for the employee's family and colleagues. The PIO will advise the media that the full details will be provided as soon as they are known and after proper notification of next of kin has been made.

If an employee death occurs in the midst of ongoing news coverage of a fire or other emergency, the PIO will focus on handling the details concerning the death. Another trained spokesperson will be assigned to handle the media relations for the incident.

### **1036.7 SERIOUSLY INJURED OR HOSPITALIZED EMPLOYEE**

Some of the notification and support procedures described in this policy for a line-of-duty death may be applied to any instance of an employee who has been seriously injured in the line of duty, except as noted below:

- (a) If the seriously injured employee has been taken to a hospital, a Fire Chief should assign a Captain who is not involved in the incident to go to the hospital and become the hospital liaison.
- (b) The Captain should establish communications with the hospital and report regularly to the Fire Chief on the employee's condition.
- (c) A representative of the employee's labor organization will also be sent to the hospital, if possible.

The hospital liaison and labor representative should work cooperatively for the benefit of the employee and his/her family. In addition, the Fire Chief should ensure close coordination with the treating medical facility.