

Directive	Line of Duty Death or Injury Notifications	300-8	1 of 6
Effective Date	October 30, 2009		



Wilkesboro Police Department

Electronic Written Directives Document

I. PURPOSE

To provide guidelines for the notification and the support of families in the event that a line of duty death or serious injury to an employee of the Wilkesboro Police Department has occurred.

II. POLICY

In the event that an employee of the Wilkesboro Police Department dies or experiences a life-threatening injury while on duty, or if Department personnel are the first to know of an employee's death or life-threatening injury while off duty, it is the responsibility of the Department to notify the next-of-kin and subsequently to provide as much assistance as possible. This notification will be made in a timely, personal, and compassionate manner.

III. GUIDELINES

- A. When the life-threatening injury or death of an employee is first reported, the employee's supervisor will notify the Administrative Staff and Chief of Police as soon as possible.
- B. Under normal circumstances, information pertaining to the death or life-threatening injury of an employee will not be given or taken over any mobile or portable radio.
- C. The Chief of Police will approve all press releases related to line of duty death or life-threatening injury.
- D. Department personnel will normally make the next-of-kin notification in person, regardless of the location of the next-of-kin. An exception would be a location of such a distance (e.g., out-of-state) to warrant the assistance of another law enforcement agency.
- E. When possible, the Chief of Police will make the next-of-kin notification, accompanied by the employee's supervisor.
- F. The notification will be made as soon as possible after the initial information is confirmed.

Directive	Line of Duty Death or Injury Notifications	300-9	2 of 6
Effective Date	October 30, 2009		

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. Functioning as the Departmental Notification Team, the Chief of Police, and the employee's supervisor will:
1. Confirm the identity of the deceased or injured employee
 2. Gather details about the circumstances surrounding the death or injury
 3. Determine any health considerations of the person(s) to be notified
 4. Determine if assistance from the clergy is needed, and make the necessary contacts
 5. Determine which personnel will take part in the notification, and determine if there are personnel who should not take part in the notification
 6. Determine if other persons are likely to be present at the notification. Members of the Departmental Notification Team should travel in separate vehicles to allow more flexibility in the type of support and assistance that may be provided.
- B. Prior to arrival, the Departmental Notification Team will discuss who will be the primary spokesperson, what will be said, and how much detail will be provided.
- C. Upon arrival at the location of next-of-kin, members of the Departmental Notification Team will:
1. Identify themselves through the designated spokesperson
 2. Ask to be allowed inside; do not make notification standing in the doorway.
 3. Determine the identity of the next-of-kin
 4. Locate a private setting
 5. Ensure that minor children are not present for the notification

Directive	Line of Duty Death or Injury Notifications	300-9	3 of 6
Effective Date	October 30, 2009		

6. Use straightforward and direct language in explaining the reason for the visit
 7. Calmly and professionally answer questions
- D. After the initial notification has been given, the Departmental Notification Team will:
1. Offer support and assistance to the family
 2. Assist in making calls to relatives, friends, and clergy
 3. Make a written record for the family of all persons contacted on their behalf
 4. Offer transportation to the hospital and/or other locations
 5. If young children are at the home, the Notification Team will arrange for child care needs. This may involve contacting co-workers' spouses, family friends, neighbors, or providing transportation to a relative's home.
- E. The Departmental Notification Team will not leave until all possible assistance has been provided. Prior to leaving the location of next-of-kin, the Departmental Notification Team will:
1. Leave names and telephone numbers where members of the Departmental Notification Team can be reached
 2. In the event that the death or injury occurred out-of-state or at another location of some distance, provide names and telephone numbers of persons and agencies who may be contacted for additional information
 3. Advise the next-of-kin of follow-up information and assistance they will receive, which may include, as appropriate:
 4. Additional information and/or details concerning the circumstances surrounding the death or injury not immediately known to the team
 5. Answers to questions posed by family members
 6. Assistance to the family with day-to-day activities for the next several days

Directive	Line of Duty Death or Injury Notifications	300-9	4 of 6
Effective Date	October 30, 2009		

7. Assistance with funeral arrangements if desired
8. Assistance with employee benefits issues. The Town Personnel Director shall be contacted and a conference arranged between the Director and next of kin to insure that benefits are fully explained and necessary request are made for applicable benefits.

V. ASSISTING THE FAMILY AT THE HOSPITAL

- A. Designated Member(s) of the Notification Team will accompany or transport the family members to the hospital.
- B. The first officer at the hospital, or another officer so assigned by a supervisor, shall:
 1. Arrange for an appropriate waiting facility for the family
 2. Arrange for a separate area for fellow police officers to assemble;
 3. If media are present, arrange for a press staging area
- C. A member of the Notification Team shall be designated to notify the appropriate hospital personnel that all medical bills related to the injured or deceased member are directed to the Town of Wilkesboro Personnel office. The family should not receive any of these bills at their residence. A follow up visit by the Notification Officer during normal business hours to ensure proper billing takes place.
- D. A member of the Notification Team shall also be assigned to ensuring that medical personnel relay pertinent information regarding the injured member's condition to the family in a timely basis and before such information is released to others or the media.
- E. A police official will arrange transportation for the family back to their residence.
- F. If possible the family should have the opportunity to visit the injured officer before death. A police official should prepare the family for what they might see in the emergency room and accompany the family into the room if so requested. Medical personnel should advise the family of visitation policies and, in the event of death, explain why an autopsy is necessary.

Directive	Line of Duty Death or Injury Notifications	300-9	5 of 6
Effective Date	October 30, 2009		

G. A notification team member should remain at the hospital while the family is present.

VI. SUPPORT FOR THE FAMILY

A. The Chief of Police, or a designee, will meet with the officer's family at their home to determine their wishes regarding Departmental participation in the preparation of the funeral or services. All possible assistance shall be rendered.

B. The Chief of Police will assign an officer to act as a liaison between the family and the department. The liaison shall ensure that long-term contact is maintained with the family for as long as the family needs support.

C. If no criminal proceedings surround the officer's death, the liaison will relay all details of the incident to the family at the earliest opportunity.

D. If criminal proceedings surround the death the liaison will:

1. Inform the family of all new developments prior to press release;
2. Keep the family apprised of legal proceedings,
3. Introduce the family to the Victim's Assistants Coordinator at the District Attorney's Office;
4. Encourage the family to attend the trial, and accompany them when possible;
5. Arrange for investigators to meet with the family at the earliest opportunity following the trial to answer their questions

E. Additional information from Concerns of Police Survivors Inc. is available from their web site under the following headings:

1. State of North Carolina Death Benefits
2. Federal Benefits Public Safety Officers' Benefits Act (P.S.O.B)
3. Support Operations to Surviving Families of Line-of-Duty Death (A Public Safety Agency Handbook)
4. A Guide to Survival (For Family and Friends of Homicide Victims)

Directive	Line of Duty Death or Injury Notifications	300-9	6 of 6
Effective Date	October 30, 2009		

5. Your Personal/Financial Diary (An Aid for Your Family)
6. "In Person, In Time" (Recommended Procedures for Death Notification)

VII. REFERENCES

CALEA 22.2.4