

**LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH:  
DEVELOPING A STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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## ABSTRACT

A firefighter death is a tragic event for both the family and the fire department. A fire department needs to be prepared for such an occurrence. The problem was the Ipswich Fire Department (IFD) does not have a procedure to deal with a line-of-duty death (LODD).

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) was to develop a LODD standard operating procedure (SOP) to provide guidance for the IFD. Action research methodology was used to answer the following three research questions:

- 1) What individuals, groups or agencies need to be considered in the event of a LODD?
- 2) What LODD benefits are available to surviving family members?
- 3) What categories, positions or responsibilities need to be included in a LODD SOP?

The procedures that were used in this ARP included a literature review, an internet search, and a survey. The initial literature review was conducted at the Learning Resource Center, the Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the USFA Publications Center located at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, MD. Applicable information was obtained from ARP's, trade journals, books, periodicals and SOP's. The internet search was used to gather additional information on line-of-duty deaths. A survey was sent to Massachusetts fire departments to determine if SOP's were established for a LODD and what types of categories were included as part of the LODD SOP.

The results showed a LODD SOP needed to be in place for a fire department to handle a LODD. There were a significant number of agencies, individuals or groups that needed to be considered in a LODD. There were a number of benefits available to the family such as death benefits, scholarships, tax exemptions and civil service priorities. There were a number of categories, positions and responsibilities that could be included in a LODD SOP.

The survey results indicated that for the most part fire departments were not prepared to deal with a LODD. Twenty fire departments indicated a LODD SOP was in place. Only one fire department had a LODD SOP in place prior to a LODD. Twelve LODD SOP's were implemented after the department experienced a LODD. The remaining seven fire departments did not learn from their experience and have not developed or implemented a LODD SOP.

The following recommendations were made with regard to the LODD SOP.

- Incorporate the LODD SOP into the *Ipswich Fire Department operations manual* after department review.
- Develop a LODD funeral SOP.
- Use the IAFC Health and Safety Committee's *Guide for investigation of a line-of-duty death* for a LODD investigation.
- Petition the Town of Ipswich to adopt the Massachusetts General Laws which require local acceptance for approval.

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## INTRODUCTION

Firefighting, rescue, and other types of emergency operations are essential activities in an inherently dangerous profession, and unfortunate tragedies do occur (National Fire Data Center, 2001). In the United States, a firefighter dies in the line of duty every three days. (Dahman, 2001). By being prepared, departments can better support families and coworkers (National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, n.d.). The organization must have a protocol in place in the unfortunate event of a line-of-duty death (Schatzle, 1993). The problem is the Ipswich Fire Department (IFD) does not have a procedure to deal with a line-of-duty death (LODD).

The purpose of this applied research project (ARP) is to develop a LODD standard operating procedure (SOP) to provide guidance for the IFD. Action research was used to answer the following three research questions:

- 1) What individuals, groups or agencies need to be considered in the event of a LODD?
- 2) What LODD benefits are available to surviving family members?
- 3) What categories, positions or responsibilities need to be included in a LODD SOP?

## BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Ipswich, founded in 1633, is one of the oldest towns in the United States. The town is located along the Atlantic coast approximately 30 miles north of Boston, the state capital. The town encompasses 33 square miles. Ipswich is well known for its 17<sup>th</sup> century homes. There are over 40 homes built before 1725 that are standing and occupied. The town has a variety of businesses and industries, but is primarily a residential community (*History*, 2002).

The protection of the town and its 13,348 inhabitants (Richards, 2001) is the responsibility of the IFD. The IFD protects \$1,556,219,428 in real estate and personal property (Ragonese, 2001). In 2001, the IFD responded to 2,579 requests for service which included

1,627 calls for assistance and 952 inspections, a 12% increase from the previous year (Michalski, 2001). The IFD is a combination department organized as part of the Ipswich Department of Public Safety (Ipswich Fire Department, 1996a). The makeup of the department is 18 career firefighters, 17 call firefighters and 4 recruit call firefighters. The IFD has not experienced a line of duty death in its history.

There are two documents that have an impact on the operation of the IFD, the *Ipswich Fire Department operations manual* and the *Agreement between the Town of Ipswich and Ipswich fire fighters, local 1913*. There is only a cursory reference in these documents to a firefighter death.

In the event a firefighter is killed, the chief of the department is notified along with the State Fire Marshal (Ipswich Fire Department, 1995). Incident stress management is provided to personnel exposed to traumatic incidents (Ipswich Fire Department, 1996b). The policy states,

When the IC recognizes a critical incident, the Chaplain or other recognized counselor should be called to the scene to begin evaluation. Officers should rotate members through the incident to reduce exposure. Initial responders should be removed from the scene as early as possible, first to a lesser impact area, then to rest. (p. 6)

The collective bargaining agreement addresses two benefits that are available to beneficiaries in the event of a firefighter death. It states (Town of Ipswich, 1999b), "If the termination is caused by death, vacation leave payment shall be made to the designated beneficiary of the employee" (p. 26). The agreement also states (Town of Ipswich, 1999a),

There shall be a \$1,000.00 payment made to an employee (or his/her designated beneficiary or his/her estate in the case of death) who retires on superannuation from the

Department pursuant to the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 32, or who dies while employed by the Department. (p. 43)

Even though the IFD has not experienced a LODD, it is most probable that the IFD may have to handle such a traumatic incident in the future. The goal of this ARP is to develop a LODD SOP to guide the IFD through such an incident. It is hoped that in the future, the IFD will adopt a LODD SOP to prepare the department to what may some day be the inevitable.

This ARP was completed to fulfill the course requirements for the Executive Leadership program. The skill/action area of the model of executive fire officer leadership had applications to this project. The ability to communicate and to manage multiple roles will be key in having the LODD SOP adopted and implemented (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2000).

This ARP relates to the USFA operational directive to reduce the loss of life from fire of firefighters. Directly, the LODD SOP does not reduce the loss of life. Indirectly, the LODD SOP will reduce the loss of life by making firefighters aware that the LODD SOP exists.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Research Question 1:** In case of an LODD, there are a number of individuals, groups or agencies that need to be considered. A review of the *Ipswich Fire Department operations manual* addresses three areas of consideration. The fire chief will be notified of a firefighter death and the State Fire Marshal's office will be notified of any death (Ipswich Fire Department, 1995). The Chaplain will be notified of a critical incident to begin evaluation of personnel (Ipswich Fire Department, 1996b).

The most important people to be considered are the firefighters' family. Proper notification and support is essential. In the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (n.d.) *Taking care of our own: A resource guide* it states, "Family members have told the foundation that the

way they were notified of the injury or death set the stage for the days, weeks and months to come” (p. 31).

An important resource, the firefighters need to be considered. As such, the IFD recognizes that a firefighter may be involved with a critical incident. Firefighters are rotated out of the incident, with debriefing or defusing to be conducted as soon as possible following the incident (Ipswich Fire Department, 1996b).

As with any significant incident the media will be actively looking for information. Rounds (2000) states, “Following a line of duty death, the administrative staff will most likely have to deal with the press” (p. 9). Liggin (1999) states, “Along with the notification process is the simultaneous tug-of-war with the news media’s right-to-know....Don’t let some reporter from the local news network make the family notifications for your department” (p. 71).

Any incident needs to be investigated and a LODD is no different. In the report, *Guide for investigation of a line-of-duty death* (IAFC Health and Safety Committee, 1993) it states,

The investigation of a line of duty-of-duty death may serve several different purposes. The most important objective, in every case, is to prevent the same situation from occurring in the future. We should never be satisfied until we can be sure that we are doing everything in our power to prevent accidents, injuries, occupational illnesses and line-of-duty deaths. (p. 5)

The IAFC Health and Safety Committee (1993) goes on to identify organizations that have a statutory authority or responsibility to investigate the incident and other groups that have legitimate reasons to be involved or to be interested in the results. Organizations that could be involved include:

- Fire cause investigator

- Medical examiner
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Insurance carrier
- United States Fire Administration (USFA)
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF)
- National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)
- U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)
- National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB)

**Research Question 2:** The LODD benefits available to a family come from a multitude of sources. On the federal level, the most important legislation is the Public Safety Officers' Benefits (PSOB) Act. The program provides a one-time financial benefit to the eligible survivors of public safety officers that have died in the line of duty (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001a). The current PSOB benefit is \$259,038 (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2002). The Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance (PSOEA) Program provides an educational assistance allowance to eligible survivors. This allowance is to help defray the expenses of a college education (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001b).

The *Guidelines and protocol for line of duty funeral* (Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, n.d.) identified 10 sections within the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) that provide benefits to survivors. They include:

- MGL, Chapter 32, §100: Provides that a full paid pension is paid only to the widow as long as she lives or does not remarry. Under an IRS ruling the pension is non-taxable.
- MGL, Chapter 32, §100A: Provides a \$100,000 death benefit paid to the widow of a firefighter killed in the line of duty.
- MGL, Chapter 59, §5, clause 42: Provides that the widow does not pay real estate taxes on her property provided the real estate is owned and occupied by the surviving spouse and that she remains unmarried.
- MGL, Chapter 59, §5, clause 43: Provides that minor children and adopted children shall pay no real estate taxes provided the real estate is used as their domicile.
- MGL, Chapter 41, §100G1/4: Provides that reasonable expenses not exceeding \$5,000 be paid for the funeral and burial of any firefighter who is killed in the line of duty. This law is a local acceptance law.
- MGL, Chapter 32B, §9C: Provides the widow and family with health insurance coverage. This law is a local acceptance law.
- MGL, Chapter 31, §26: Provides for the children of firefighters killed in the line of duty to have their names placed in the first position on the eligible list, provided they have passed the required written and physical examination.
- MGL, Chapter 15A, §16: Provides a public service scholarship program that provides scholarships to the children and widowed spouses of firefighters killed in the line of duty.
- MGL, Chapter 32B, §11D: An accidental death and dismemberment law for the firefighter who died as natural and proximate result of bodily injury accidentally

sustained or a hazard undergone as a result and while performing official duties. This law is a local acceptance law.

- MGL, Chapter 32B, §11A: Provides that a firefighter who is killed in the line of duty is covered to the maximum amount of insurance that the firefighter could have purchased. This law is a local acceptance law.

On the local level, there are only two benefits available to a deceased firefighters' family. The beneficiary of a firefighter will be paid the remainder of the firefighters' vacation leave (Town of Ipswich, 1999b). The second benefit is a \$1,000 payment made to the beneficiary of a firefighter who dies while employed by the fire department (Town of Ipswich, 1999a).

Additional benefits include scholarship programs that are available to families of fallen firefighters to help further their college education. In West's (2001) ARP he identified three national scholarship programs, which include the Paul Sarbanes Scholarship Program, MasterGuard's Fallen Heroes Scholarship Fund and the W. H. McClennan Scholarship. Other national scholarship programs include the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the John Heinz Memorial Scholarship Fund (National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, 2002). The 100 Club of Massachusetts provides scholarships for spouses and children of firefighters who die in the line of duty (Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, n.d.). Other benefits that may be available to eligible families are social security death benefits and veteran benefits (Cave, 2001).

**Research Question 3:** The literature review identified a number of categories, positions or responsibilities that could be included in a LODD SOP. A common thread through out the research has shown that an employee emergency contact information form should be on file in case of a LODD. In the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (n.d.) *Taking care of our own: A resource guide* it states, "Experience has shown repeatedly that when a line-of-duty death or

serious injury occurs up-to-date employee information is critical. Officials responsible for notification must have access to current and correct information” (p. 9).

In Schatzle’s (1993) article, he identified five categories to include in a SOP. They include operations, media, CISD, employee/family support and victim benefits. In Becker’s (1991) ARP, he identified nine categories to include in a SOP. The categories include:

- On-scene actions during the incident
- Notifications
- Procedures at the hospital
- Death notification to the family
- Family liaison officer
- Additional contacts
- After the incident
- Investigation team
- Records to be assembled related to the incident

A review of SOP’s has identified additional categories that have been included in a LODD SOP. These categories include definitions (Corpus Christi Fire Department, 2001), critical incident stress management (Charlotte Fire Department, 2000), assigned responsibilities (Tempe Fire Department, n.d.), and key positions definitions (Berkshire County Fire Chief’s Association, n.d.).

The Berkshire County Fire Chief’s Association (n.d.) identified 11 positions. These positions include chaplain or clergy coordinator, hospital relations coordinator, benefits coordinator, family coordinator, department coordinator, funeral coordinator, procession

coordinator, cemetery coordinator, legal team, investigation team, and critical incident stress management team. In Cave's (2001) ARP he identified the following positions.

- Survivor action officer
- Notification
- Hospital liaison officer
- Family liaison officer
- Public information officer
- Funeral liaison officer
- Security officer
- Logistics officer
- Benefits officer

In summary, the literature review has indicated a strong need for a LODD SOP. Due to the complex nature of dealing with a LODD, there is no way the IFD can handle a LODD successfully and professionally without a set of guidelines to follow. Although it may take a considerable amount of time to implement the LODD SOP, due to job postings and training, this does not detract from the project.

## **PROCEDURES**

### **Definition of Terms**

Incident commander (IC). The person responsible for directing and controlling operations at every incident (Paulsgrove, 1997).

Line-of-duty death (LODD). The loss of life while performing any assigned tasks associated with an officially sanctioned performance of duty, whether it is as a paid or volunteer member (Dahman, 2001).

Local acceptance law. A state law that must be accepted locally either at town meetings or at the City Council by majority vote of city council and approved by the Mayor (Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, n.d.).

Standard operating procedure (SOP). Guidelines by which a fire department operates during emergency and non-emergency situations (International Fire Service Training Association, 1992).

### **Assumptions and Limitations**

An assumption made during the research project was that fire departments would have a LODD SOP. The literature review, internet search and survey indicated that this was not correct.

There were a number of limitations found during the research with regard to the internet search and the survey. The internet search proved to be cumbersome and time consuming. No SOP's could be located from the internet search. Any information that was located came from individual agencies such as the IAFF, IAFC, and the Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

In regard to the survey, there were a number of factors limiting the survey results. The first factor influencing the survey results were the number of surveys returned. The assumption being that 100% of the surveys mailed would be returned. In this case, the survey resulted in a 66% return rate. The possible factors influencing the rate of return include the recipients did not receive the survey; the recipients ignored the survey, and the timing of the survey. The second factor limiting the survey results was the make up of the survey sample of fire departments. The sample was restricted to fire departments in Massachusetts. The assumption being that sending a survey to a cross section of fire departments from across the country would result in a more balanced result. The six-month time frame for completing the ARP and personal finances prohibited such a survey. A third factor was the lack of LODD SOP's returned with the survey.

Of the 13 fire departments that indicated they had a LODD SOP, only 3 fire departments forwarded their LODD SOP.

### **Research Methodology**

Action research methodology was used to complete this ARP. The first step was to recheck the problem statement for clarity and comprehensiveness. The goal of the ARP was to develop a LODD SOP for the IFD. Action research methodology used a literature review, an internet search and a survey sent to a random sample of fire departments in Massachusetts.

The initial literature review was conducted at the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Applied research projects, trade journals, books and periodicals were researched for pertinent information. Additional material was obtained from the Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the USFA Publications Center. An internet search was conducted to locate additional information on LODD's.

As part of the research project, a line-of-duty death SOP/SOG survey (Appendix A) was developed. The survey consisted of seven questions based on department profile, line-of-duty deaths and SOP's. A cover letter (Appendix B) was included to explain the purpose of the survey and a due date for its return. A self-addressed envelope was included with the survey to facilitate a better return.

There are 366 fire departments or districts in Massachusetts (Executive Office of Public Safety, 2002). The last two digits of the five digit zip code were used to achieve a random sample of fire departments to be sent the line-of-duty death SOP/SOG survey (Therriault, 2000). Microsoft Excel 97 (1997) was used to generate two random numbers. The function "randbetween" produced two random numbers from zero to nine. The program produced one and three as the random numbers. If a department's last two digits of the zip code included one,

three, or both, the department was included in the sample. This resulted in 133 fire departments being sent surveys.

## RESULTS

**Research Question 1:** The research has shown that there are a significant number of individuals, groups or agencies that need to be considered in the event of a LODD. The most important is the firefighter's family. How they are notified will set the stage for the days, weeks and months to come (National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (n.d.). The media needs to be taken into consideration so they are not the ones to notify the family of a firefighter's death (Liggin, 1999).

The *Ipswich Fire Department operations manual* addresses policies that relate to the notification of a firefighter death to the fire chief and State Fire Marshal (Ipswich Fire Department, 1995). The Chaplain will be notified of a critical incident along with firefighters being rotated out of an incident for debriefing or defusing (Ipswich Fire Department, 1996b).

With any incident, a firefighter's death needs to be investigated. Research has shown that there are at least eleven organizations that may have a direct or indirect role in the investigation (IAFC Health and Safety Committee, 1993).

**Research Question 2:** The research located a number of LODD benefits that are available to a family of a fallen firefighter. The benefits are classified as either federal, state, local, or national. On the federal level the PSOB Act provides a one time financial benefit of \$259,038 to eligible survivors of a public safety officer that has died in the line of duty (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001a, 2002). Educational assistance is available through the PSOEA Program to help defray college expenses (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001b).

On the state level, there are 10 benefits available under Massachusetts General Laws (Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, n.d.). Of those 10 benefits, 4 need to be accepted locally by the town or city council and mayor for the families to receive those benefits.

Locally, a deceased firefighter's family will be paid for the remainder of the firefighter's vacation time and receive a \$1,000 payment (Town of Ipswich, 1999a, 1999b). The 100 Club of Massachusetts provides scholarships to further the education of spouses and children of firefighters that have died in the line of duty (Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts, n.d.).

Research found five national scholarships available to families of fallen firefighters. The Paul Sarbanes Scholarship program, MasterGuard's Fallen Heroes Scholarship Fund, W. H. McClennan Scholarship, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, and the John Heinz Memorial Scholarship Fund provide financial assistance for college education (National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, 2002; West, 2001).

**Research Question 3:** Research has identified a number of categories, positions or responsibilities that can be included in a LODD SOP. One of the most important pieces for a LODD SOP was an employee emergency contact information (National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, n.d.). This form was included in the SOP's that were reviewed. The difference between the SOP's was on the information required. The forms ranged from the very basic (2 pages) to very in depth (10 pages).

Research identified 17 categories and 20 positions that can be included in a LODD SOP. The review of material indicated the number of positions or categories was dependent on how elaborate the fire department wanted the SOP. The more in depth the SOP the more positions and categories that were used.

A survey was sent out to fire departments to determine if the department has experienced a LODD, has a LODD SOP in place and if so, what categories were used in the SOP. The results were tabulated by total number and by percentages for each question and answer, where applicable. The survey results can be found in Appendix C.

The survey was sent to a random sample of 133 fire departments from Massachusetts. Of that total, 88 or 66% of the departments responded to the survey. Of that total, 20 or 23% of the departments have had a LODD. At the time of the death, only one fire department had a LODD SOP in place. Currently only 13 or 15% of the departments surveyed have a LODD SOP. The survey indicates very few Massachusetts fire departments are prepared to deal with a LODD.

The research has resulted in the development of a LODD SOP (Appendix D) for the IFD. The LODD SOP is comprised of 14 sections. The section on a funeral refers to the establishment of a separate funeral SOP due to the elaborateness of conducting a LODD funeral. The IFD will use either the IAFC or IAFF funeral protocol until a funeral SOP is developed.

## **DISCUSSION**

Dahman (2001) states, "Some departments, even after having experienced a line-of-duty death, still have not developed comprehensive guidelines and procedures" p. 5. The results of this research continue to prove that point. The survey, alone, indicates that fire departments do not learn from previous incidents. Of the 20 fire departments that experienced a LODD, only one was prepared for a LODD with a LODD SOP. Even after a LODD, seven fire departments still do not have a LODD SOP in place.

Rounds (2000) states, "The line of duty death of a firefighter is a dreadful, mind-numbing experience for all who are touched by the event. It is not the time to invent policy or act

impulsively” p. 8. Most departments, including the IFD, live by the old adage “It will never happen here”.

The research has indicated a multitude of benefits, positions and categories that need to be taken into consideration as part of a LODD SOP. Dahman (2001) states,

A more complete set of procedures needs to be established in order to better provide the family of the fallen firefighter(s) with the proper help and assistance in obtaining federal, state, and local death benefits. If just one item is handled incorrectly, the members of the fallen firefighter’s family and fellow firefighters are the ones who may suffer more than is necessary during the period following the actual death. (p. 6)

The author’s interpretation is there is an overwhelming need for a LODD SOP. West (2001) states, “...it is imperative that today’s fire service leaders be better prepared to handle an unexpected line of duty death of a fellow firefighter” p. 7.

The implications are the IFD will not be prepared for a LODD. Clearly, not being prepared will make a bad situation worse for both the firefighters and the fallen firefighter’s family. Instead of being professional, the IFD would appear to be incompetent when dealing with the death of one of its own.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The problem was the IFD does not have a procedure to deal with a LODD. The purpose of the ARP was to develop a LODD SOP to provide guidance for the IFD. It is recommended the IFD incorporate the LODD SOP, in Appendix D, into the *Ipswich Fire Department operations manual*.

During the literature review and the development of the LODD SOP, it became obvious that the LODD SOP could become too complex or cumbersome. The following recommendations have been made to address these items:

- 1) A review of the LODD SOP by officers and firefighters to obtain their input for deletions or additions to the policy prior to adoption.
- 2) Develop a funeral SOP for a LODD. Until a funeral LODD is developed the IFD should follow the IAFC's *LODD response plan* or the IAFF's *IAFF recommended protocol for line-of-deaths*.
- 3) For a LODD investigation the department should use the guidelines set in the IAFC Health and Safety Committee's *Guide for investigation of a line-of-duty death*.
- 4) Petition the Town of Ipswich to adopt the MGL's with local acceptance provisions.

In the future, this ARP may become a source for another Executive Fire Officer Program candidate. My recommendation to the future readers is to use this ARP as a guideline. The LODD SOP was developed for the IFD. The reader may have to make adjustments in the SOP that reflects their department's make up and commitment.

The benefit to the IFD is that the department and its members will be prepared and have a document to review in the event of a firefighter LODD. A firefighter's death is a very stressful situation for the family and the department. By being prepared, the IFD will be able to manage the LODD to a successful conclusion.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Line-of-Duty Death SOP/SOG Survey**

- 1) What is the make-up of the department?  
 Career     Combination     Call     Volunteer
  
- 2) How many personnel does the department employ?  
 <50     50-100     101-150     151-200     >200
  
- 3) Does the department have an SOP/SOG in place to deal with a line-of-duty death (LODD)?  
 Yes     No
  
- 4) If no, does the department plan to develop a LODD SOP/SOG in the future?  
 Yes     No
  
- 5) Has the department experienced a line of duty death?  
 Yes     No
  
- 6) If yes, was there a SOP/SOG in place before the LODD?  
 Yes     No
  
- 7) Does the LODD SOP/SOG address any of the following? (check all that apply)
  - Employee emergency contact information
  - Notification of family
  - Notification of local, state and federal agencies
  - Investigations
  - Funerals
  - CISD
  - PSOB
  - State benefits
  - Scholarships
  - Fire department chaplain
  - Autopsies
  - A list of personnel to fill key positions
  - Other (please list)

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the survey. Could you please enclose or E-mail (ajtheriault@netway.com) a copy of your LODD SOP/SOG.

If you would like a copy of the survey results, please provide an E-mail address.

**APPENDIX B**  
**Cover Letter**

May 28, 2002

«Title» «FirstName» «LastName»  
«Company»  
«Address1»  
«City», «State» «PostalCode»

Dear «Title» «LastName»,

As a lieutenant with the Ipswich Fire Department, I am currently enrolled in the Executive Fire Officers Program at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. One of the requirements of the EFO program is to complete an applied research project that relates to the Ipswich Fire Department. The purpose of my project is to develop a line-of-duty death (LODD) standard operating procedure.

A portion of my research includes sending a survey to a random sample of fire departments from across Massachusetts, for which yours has been chosen. Could you, or your designee, please take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey and return it. For your convenience, a self-addressed stamped envelope has been included. Please return the survey by June 12, 2002.

If your department has a LODD standard operating procedure, could you please send or E-mail a copy. My E-mail address is [ajtheriault@netway.com](mailto:ajtheriault@netway.com).

Thank you for your help in this endeavor. If you would like a copy of the survey results, please include an E-mail address with the returned survey.

Sincerely,

Andre J. Theriault  
Lieutenant

**APPENDIX C**  
**Survey Results**

<b>Surveys Sent: 133</b>	<b>Surveys Returned: 88</b>	<b>Percentage Returned: 66</b>
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1) What is the make-up of the department?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Career	13	15
Combination	47	53
Call	15	17
Volunteer	13	15

2) How many personnel does the department employ?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<50	66	75
50-100	19	22
101-150	0	0
151-200	0	0
>200	3	3

3) Does the department have an SOP/SOG in place to deal with a line-of-duty death (LODD)?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	13	15
No	75	85

4) If no, does the department plan to develop a LODD SOP/SOG in the future?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	52	69
No	18	24
Unknown	5	7

5) Has the department experienced a line-of-duty death?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	20	23
No	66	75
No Response	2	2

**APPENDIX C**  
**Survey Results**

6) If yes, was there an SOP/SOG in place before the LODD?

	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Yes	1	5
No	19	95

7) Does the LODD SOP/SOG address any of the following? (check all that apply)

Employee emergency contact information	10
Notification of family	10
Notification of local, state and federal agencies	11
Investigations	8
Funerals	11
CISD	9
PSOB	6
State benefits	8
Scholarships	7
Fire department chaplain	9
Autopsies	6
A list of personnel to fill key positions	8
Other:	
Honor guard	1
Flags	1
Area announcements	1

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure**

**Date:** TBD

**Policy:** 1.05

**Title:** Line-of-Duty Death (LODD)

**Intent:** It is the intent of this policy to provide the Ipswich Fire Department (IFD) the procedures needed to handle a LODD. The goal of the IFD is to handle a LODD calmly, professionally and effectively without bringing any undue stress to the fallen firefighter's family and department members. The number one priority will be the well being of the family and fellow firefighters.

#### **Section One:** Firefighter Emergency Contact Information

For the IFD to be prepared for a LODD, all members need to fill out the Firefighter Emergency Contact Information form. This form needs to be reviewed annually by each member to verify or update information. The form will be sealed in an envelope and placed in the firefighter's personnel file located in the Chief's office. The Chief or his designee will only open the envelope at the time of a LODD. Once a firefighter leaves the employ of the department, the envelope will be returned.

#### **Section Two:** Radio Procedures

Once a LODD has occurred or is inevitable all communications between the Incident Commander (IC) and Fire Alarm need to be done with the Nextel with regard to the situation. Radio communications with regard to the LODD need to cease so as not to unduly alarm firefighter families.

#### **Section Three:** Definitions

**Benefits:** Financial payments, scholarships, tax benefits, and special programs available to the immediate next-of-kin of the fallen firefighter.

**Line-of-duty death (LODD):** The loss of life while performing any assigned tasks associated with an officially sanctioned performance of duty, whether it is as a paid or call member.

**Survivors:** Immediate family members including: spouses, all children, including legally adopted children; parents; siblings; and significant others.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure**

#### **Section Four:** Key Positions and Responsibilities

Due to the magnitude of a LODD, it is impossible for one person to handle all the responsibilities. It is necessary to assign career and/or call personnel to fill key positions. This will be done on a voluntary basis, but a number of key positions will be pre-determined due to contractual agreements.

Benefits Liaison: Will be responsible to assist and advise the family on the financial and non-financial benefits that are available to them.

Call Firefighter Liaison: Will notify the Massachusetts Call Volunteer Firefighters Association (MC/VFA) of the LODD and funeral arrangements.

Chaplain: Will assist the Chief as part of the Family Notification Team. Assist the Funeral Liaison with funeral arrangements. Assist the CISD Liaison.

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) Liaison: The CISD Liaison will be responsible to notify the CISD Fire Task Force, arrange for a neutral site for the debriefing and coordinate assistance for the family.

Family Liaison: The Family Liaison will be available to the family to provide assistance for their needs and to provide an overview of the Department's SOP's. This will include, but not be limited to, transportation to the hospital, morgue or funeral home, and assistance in notifying other relatives or friends.

Family Notification Team: The Family Notification Team is responsible for notifying the family of the LODD. The team will consist of the Fire Chief or designee, the Family Liaison, the Chaplain and/or person designated by the firefighter on the Firefighter Emergency Contact Information form.

Fire Investigation Team: The Fire Investigation Team will consist of one fire department (by contract) and one police department representative. Their job is to investigate and determine the cause and origin of the fire in conjunction with the State Fire Marshal's Office.

Funeral Liaison: The Funeral Liaison will coordinate the funeral arrangements based on the wishes of the family.

Hospital Liaison: The Hospital Liaison will coordinate activities at the receiving hospital. To include, but not limited to securing a private room for the family, medical updates, if applicable, and a visit with the firefighter.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure**

LODD Investigation Team: The LODD Investigation Team is responsible to investigate the facts of what happened, identify the casual factors and recommend appropriate corrective actions in an unbiased printed report. The team will consist of the Fire Chief or designee, Safety Officer, Training Officer, Fire Prevention Coordinator, and police detective.

Mutual Aid Liaison: The Mutual Aid Liaison is responsible to provide coverage for the Town of Ipswich during a LODD funeral.

Photographer: The photographer (by contract) will assist the Fire Investigation Team and the LODD Investigation Team with documenting evidence.

Public Information Officer (PIO): The PIO will prepare and distribute a press release to the media following the Department's notification of the next of kin.

Union Liaison: The Union president or designee will be responsible to notify the IAFF of the LODD and the funeral arrangements. The Union Liaison will coordinate with the Funeral Liaison any IAFF funeral protocols.

#### **Section Five:** Department Notifications

The following individuals will be notified immediately of a LODD. All other notifications will be conducted by the liaison for that section. The IC will have Fire Alarm notify the individuals by telephone or pager, if they are not already on scene. At no time should notification be done over the radio.

- 1) Fire Chief
- 2) Department members
- 3) Chaplain
- 4) Public Safety Director

#### **Section Six:** Family Notification

The Family Notification Team will notify the firefighter's family as soon as possible. This needs to be completed before releasing the firefighter's name to the media. The Family Notification Team will retrieve and review the Firefighter Emergency Contact Information form before notifying the family. The wishes of the family will take precedent over Department SOP's or wishes.

- 1) Notification will be done in person.
- 2) Department members should be in dress uniform, if possible.
- 3) The Family Notification Team should arrive in two vehicles, if possible.
- 4) Only facts should be given. Do not speculate. If the team can not answer a question, let the family know you will get the answer.

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure**

5) Once notification has been completed, offer the services of the Family Liaison.

#### **Section Seven:** Hospital

It may be the case that the firefighter has been transported to the hospital either as DOA or for life threatening injuries, with no chance for survival. If that is the case, the Hospital Liaison will be notified of the receiving hospital and respond to that location. The Hospital Liaison will meet with hospital personnel to prepare for the arrival of the family. This should include securing a private room away from the media, medical updates on the firefighter, if applicable, and a final visit if the family so desires. A final visit may not always be advisable. The Hospital Liaison may need to explain the condition of the firefighter to prepare the family before the visit. Additionally, the Hospital Liaison will need to gather and secure any PPE that may have been transported with the firefighter for the LODD Investigation Team

#### **Section Eight:** Critical Incident Stress Debriefing

CISD sessions can take two forms; a defusing and/or a debriefing. A defusing will take place shortly after the incident to allow free expression and dissemination of information. A debriefing, a formal structured confidential discussion, will be conducted within 24 to 48 hours of the incident. This will allow those involved to discuss the facts, their thoughts and reactions to the incident. At no time will these sessions be used as a critique for the incident. Once a LODD has occurred, the CISD Liaison, with assistance from the Chaplain, should immediately notify the CISD Fire Task Force. The liaison should provide information to the team about the incident, request a response, and secure a neutral meeting location. The Chaplain or the Family Liaison will offer these services to the family, if they so desire.

#### **Section Nine:** Media

With any significant event, the media will be looking for information. It is important the IFD protect the firefighter's family privacy from any intrusion by the media, unless they desire to provide a statement. The PIO will prepare a press release or statement to the media, which will be provided following the notification of the family by the Family Notification Team. The press release or statement should provide only known facts do not speculate about the cause of death. Do not include the family's address or telephone number.

#### **Section Ten:** Benefits

The Benefits Liaison will assist the family in securing any financial and non-financial benefits. The Benefits Liaison will notify the appropriate agencies on the LODD, obtain paperwork, retrieve any required documentation, and assist the family with filling out and filing claim forms. The following benefits are available to the family.

1) Public Safety Officer's Benefits

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### Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure

- 2) Public Safety Officer's Educational Assistance
- 3) MGL, Chapter 32, §100A: \$100,000 death benefit
- 4) MGL, Chapter 32, §100: Provides that a full paid pension is paid to the widow
- 5) MGL, Chapter 59, §5, clause 42: Widow does not pay real estate taxes
- 6) MGL, Chapter 59, §5, clause 43: Minor children do not pay real estate taxes
- 7) MGL, Chapter 31, §26: The names of children go to the first position on civil service list
- 8) MGL, Chapter 15A, §16: Provides a public service scholarship program
- 9) Remainder of vacation leave paid to family
- 10) \$1,000 payment to the beneficiary from the Town of Ipswich
- 11) Paul Sarbanes Scholarship Program
- 12) MasterGuard's Fallen Heroes Scholarship Program
- 13) National Fallen Firefighters Foundation
- 14) Heinz Memorial Scholarship Fund
- 15) W. H. McClellan Scholarship (IAFF members only)
- 16) The 100 Club of Massachusetts
- 17) Social Security Death Benefits
- 18) Veteran Benefits

#### **Section Eleven:** Investigation

The LODD Investigation Team will conduct a thorough and unbiased investigation into the LODD and provide a written report on its findings. The sole purpose of this investigation is to prevent this from happening again. It is not the intent of this investigation to place blame on any individual or individuals. The LODD Investigation Team will follow the guidelines set forth in the *Guide for investigation of a line-of-duty death* by the IAFC Health and Safety Committee. The subsequent steps should be followed:

- 1) Isolate the scene
- 2) Impound evidence
- 3) Document the condition of safety equipment
- 4) Photograph the scene
- 5) Arrange for an autopsy
- 6) Identify witnesses
- 7) Conduct interviews
- 8) Obtain records of the incident
- 9) Develop a time line
- 10) Examine physical evidence
- 11) Research documents
- 12) Seek expert assistance
- 13) Obtain legal advice

**APPENDIX D**  
**Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure**

**Section Twelve:** Funeral

The Funeral Liaison will work with the family on setting the funeral arrangements. The funeral arrangements will be based on the family's wishes, not those of the IFD. The Funeral Liaison will coordinate with the Union Liaison and the Call Firefighter Liaison in regards to the funeral protocols of the IAFF and the MC/VFA. Due to the complexity of a LODD funeral, the Funeral Liaison will follow the guidelines set forth in the ICHIEFS *LODD response plan* or the IAFF's *IAFF recommended protocol for line-of-duty deaths* until such time that the IFD develops its own funeral protocol.

**Section Thirteen:** Contact Numbers

**Key Positions**

Name	Assignment	Telephone	Pager
	Benefits Liaison		
	Call Firefighter Liaison		
	Chaplain		
	CISD Liaison		
	Family Liaison		
	Family Notification Team		
	Family Notification Team		
	Family Notification Team		
	Fire Investigation Team		
	Fire Investigation Team		
	Funeral Liaison		
	Hospital Liaison		
	LODD Investigation Team		
	LODD Investigation Team		
	LODD Investigation Team		
	LODD Investigation Team		
	LODD Investigation Team		
	Mutual Aid Liaison		
	Photographer		
	PIO		
	Union Liaison		

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**Department Members**

Name	Telephone	Pager
Chief		
Staff Lieutenant		
Lieutenant A shift		
Firefighter A Shift		
Firefighter A Shift		
Firefighter A Shift		
Lieutenant B Shift		
Firefighter B Shift		
Firefighter B Shift		
Lieutenant C Shift		
Firefighter C Shift		
Firefighter C Shift		
Firefighter C Shift		
Lieutenant D Shift		
Firefighter D Shift		
Firefighter D Shift		
Firefighter D Shift		
Call Lieutenant		
Call Firefighter		
Call Firefighter		
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Call Firefighter		
Chaplain		
Public Safety Director		

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**Other Contacts**

Name	Telephone	Reason
CISD Fire Task Force – Spike Lawless	1-617-473-2798	Debriefing
Department of Veterans Affairs	1-800-772-1213	Death benefit
Fire Marshals Office	1-978-567-3100	Investigation
Heinz Memorial Scholarship Fund	1-301-447-1365	Scholarship
International Association of Fire Chiefs	1-703-273-0911	LODD notification
International Association of Fire Fighters	1-202-737-8484	LODD notification
Massachusetts Call Volunteer Firefighter Association	1-800-551-3473	LODD notification
MasterGuard’s Fallen Heroes Scholarship Program	1-972-446-9966	Scholarship
National Fallen Firefighters Foundation	1-301-447-1365	LODD notification Scholarship
National Fire Academy	1-301-447-1123	LODD notification
National Fire Academy (security office after hours)	1-301-447-1000	LODD notification
National Fire Protection Association	1-800-344-3555	Investigation
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health	1-800-356-4674	Investigation
National Transportation Safety Board	1-888-327-4236	Investigation
Office of the Chief Medical Examiner	1-617-267-6767	Autopsy
Paul Sarbanes Scholarship Program	1-301-447-1365	Scholarship
Professional Fire Fighters of Massachusetts	1-617-523-4506	LODD notification
Public Safety Officer’s Benefit Program	1-888-744-6513	Death benefit
Public Safety Officer’s Educational Assistance Program	1-888-744-6513	Education
Social Security Administration	1-800-772-1213	Death benefit
State Board of Retirement	1-800-392-6014	Death benefit
The 100 Club of Massachusetts	1-617-536-4410	Scholarship
United States Department of Transportation	1-888-327-4236	Investigation
United States Fire Administration	1-301-447-1272	LODD notification
W. H. McClennan Scholarship	1-202-872-8484	Scholarship

**Section Fourteen:** Mutual Aid

It will be the goal of the IFD to allow all members to attend the LODD funeral. With this in mind, the Mutual Aid Liaison will contact mutual aid departments to provide coverage during the funeral. The Mutual Aid Liaison will provide maps and pilots (may require non-fire department members such as DPW employees) to covering companies.

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**Line-of-Duty Death Standard Operating Procedure**

**Firefighter Emergency Contact Information**

The information that you provide will only be used in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take a few moments to fill the form out accurately as possible. The information that you provide will help the department take care of your family. Place the form in an envelope and seal. The packet will be placed in your personnel file for safe keeping. Remember to update the form if changes occur, but review the form at least annually.

**Personal Information**

Last Name	
First Name	
Middle Name	
Street Address	
City/Town	
State	
Zip Code	
Home Phone	

**Contact Information**

Please list family or friends, in the order, that you would like them notified by the department. If the department needs to notify a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult to notify. If additional space is needed, use the back of the sheet. All notifications will be done in person by the Family Notification Team.

Name	
Relationship	
Home Address	
City/Town	
State	
Zip Code	
Home Phone	
Cell Phone/Pager	
Employer	
Employer Address	
City/Town	
State	
Zip Code	
Employer Phone	

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Name	
Relationship	
Street Address	
City/Town	
State	
Zip Code	
Home Phone	
Cell Phone/Pager	
Employer	
Employer Address	
City/Town	
State	
Zip Code	
Employer Phone	

**Children**

Names	Date of Births

**Family Notification**

The Family Notification Team consisting of the Chief or his designee, the Family Liaison and the Chaplain will notify the family. Are there any other people that you would like to help with the notification process? Please list.

Name	Phone Number

**APPENDIX D  
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**Optional Information**

Religious Preference	
Pastor/Priest	
Church Affiliation	
Street Address	
Town/City	
State	
Zip Code	
Phone Number	

Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services?                      Yes      No

Are you entitled to a military funeral?                                      Yes      No

Do you wish to have a military funeral?                                      Yes      No

Do you wish to have a fire service funeral?                                      Yes      No

Do you have any special requests?    Yes      No

Please list.

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Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_