

SUPPORT FOR LINE OF DUTY DEATH

Executive Development

Providing Survivor and Member Support
for Line of Duty Death Guidelines

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Certification Statement

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that the appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

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Abstract

The problem was that the current line of duty death policy and procedures for the Wichita Fire Department (WFD) did not provide support for the survivors or the department members. This research was conducted to identify elements to improve the existing line of duty death (LODD) policy and procedures.

Descriptive research determined what LODD preparations should be utilized, what components could be used in a survivor notification guideline, and how support should be provided to survivors and members of the department.

Procedures involved literature review, internal questionnaire, and personal interview.

Results indicated support systems should be added to existing LODD procedures.

Development of improved support guidelines to WFD line of duty death policy and procedures were recommended.

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Providing Survivor and Member Support For Line of Duty Death Guidelines

Introduction

In the New Testament of the Bible in John 15:13 it states “Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends” (New King James Version). This Bible verse is read often at line of duty death funerals across the country when there is a death of a firefighter (Mayo & Ploeger, 2004). The U.S. Fire Administration has reported that over the last 10 years, the fire service has averaged almost 112 deaths per year (United States Fire Administration [USFA], 2005). It is the planning and preparation that goes into honoring the firefighter(s), caring for their family and fellow members of the fire department for which this topic was chosen.

The problem is that the current line of duty death policy and procedures for the Wichita Fire Department (WFD) does not provide support for the family or for the members of the department during this emotional period.

The purpose of this applied research project is to identify elements to improve the current line of duty death policy and procedures to assist the Wichita Fire Department.

Descriptive research methodology will be used to answer the following research questions: (a) What pre line of duty death preparation should be utilized by the WFD? (b) what components should be included in a WFD survivor notification guideline? and (c) how should the WFD provide support for the survivors and members of the department?

Background and Significance

Wichita is located in the south central part of Kansas and is the largest city in the state with 362,000 people. The city is a full service municipality with approximately 3,300 employees and an operating budget of about \$450 million (City of Wichita, 2007).

The Wichita Fire Department (WFD) was founded in 1886 when the growth of the city exceeded the capabilities of the volunteer fire company that was organized in 1872 (Wichita Fire Department, 1992). The Wichita Fire Department, like many others, has evolved from the original purpose of fighting fires to its current task of providing a much broader level of emergency services to the public. The department has demonstrated exceptional community value by providing emergency medical response, fire suppression, technical rescue, fire prevention, public education, public health services as well as internal and external customer service. The WFD is comprised of 419 members working at 19 neighborhood firehouses (Wichita Fire Department, 2006).

Firefighter fatalities are still occurring nationwide. Each year in the United States approximately 100 firefighters are killed while on duty (USFA, 2002). Any department nationwide; large or small, volunteer or career could be affected by a firefighter death.

With this research the WFD administration will be better prepared in the event of a line of duty death. In the past the WFD had to rely on a chief officer to carry out the burden of making arrangements without a detailed written policy or procedure on death notification, survivor care and support, and fire department member care and support. By having a detailed guideline in place, with continuing education on LODD procedures, the WFD would be better prepared than it has been in the past.

In the 121 year history of the Wichita Fire Department sixteen firefighters have lost their lives while on duty (Wichita Fire Department, 2007). The most recent firefighter fatality in Wichita occurred on November 15th, 2004. Don Kersting, WFD administrative battalion chief was in his office at fire department headquarters that morning. Firefighters found him slumped over his desk and unresponsive (USFA, 2005).

This applied research project will provide information to help resolve the identified problem and assist the WFD senior staff administrators to make an evaluation of existing procedures and possible revisions to the current line of duty death policy and procedures.

Because the results of this research will improve the capability of WFD chief officers to carry out the policy and procedures of a line of death, this applied research will support one of the United States Fire Administration operational objectives; “to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues” (USFA, 2003).

This applied research project encompasses one of the goals of the Executive Development course to “provide Executive Fire Officer’s with an opportunity to use research to solve real-world problems in their work environments” (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2006)

Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review is to summarize information received from other sources that are key elements of the research questions for this report. The key elements are: (a) pre-incident preparation, (b) notification, and (c) survivor support.

Pre-incident Preparation

Pre-incident preparation communicates to the organization and to the fallen firefighter’s family that the department is concerned about their long term care and well being (Antonellis, 2006). Organizations should insure that team leadership, reporting structures, authorities, responsibility checklists, and training requirements are all clearly defined (Tobin, n.d.). Planning is critical to successfully handling a line of duty death. Having procedures in place will make it much easier for everyone involved; the family, the department, and the community (National Fallen Firefighter Foundation [NFFF], n.d.). Being prepared by training and having procedures to follow has been one of the foundations of the fire service since its inception. Standard

Operating Procedures (SOP) have been utilized within the fire service for years. These are standards that fire departments study and train on before an incident occurs. These preplanned SOPs are written to assist members of the fire service to deal with rapidly evolving situations (Patrick, 2005). A detailed example of planning considerations from the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (NFFF) is listed in Appendix A.

The International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (2002) states “The administrative and logistical aspects of an LODD are often overwhelming to those individuals and agencies that are ill prepared”. On average, a firefighter is killed in the line of duty every three days (Manning, 2007). Preplanning leads to lack of confusion, it provides support in a sensitive and timely manner, and to be better prepared for a tragic event (John McGrath, personal communication, March 10, 2007).

The incident commander at the scene of a line of duty death will be responsible for all activities by the fire department until he/she delegates duties or is relieved of command. These activities should include securing the site where the fatality occurred, securing the firefighter’s equipment, and start the interview of witnesses (Rickman, 2006). Phoenix Fire Department (2003) LODD policy states “The incident commander ensures that the Fire Chief and senior staff is advised of the event and its details” (p.5). Having an incident management system (IMS) placed into LODD department policy and procedures provides overall coordination of a line of duty death to assure that essential steps are not left out. Each person responsible for an assignment can be written on an incident management status board (Antonellis, 2006). The IMS LODD structure should include: (a) Incident Commander, (b) Notification Team, (c) Family Support Team, (d) Hospital Liaison, (e) PIO, (f) Benefits Coordinator and (g) Funeral Coordinator (NFFF, 2007).

The single most important form initially in a firefighter death or injury procedure is an employee emergency contact information form (Mitrano III, 2005). This form will assist fire department representatives with notification of next of kin. Agencies should use employee emergency information contact forms not only to obtain critical personal information from their firefighters, but also to record firefighter desires for notification of family information in the event of serious injury or death (Haddix, 1996). The Fire Department of New York (FDNY) uses a computer based system called the Emergency Notification System (ENS) on the FDNY intranet, and on a hard copy Emergency Notification Card (BP-19). Information on the ENS and BP-19 form is verified by the individual members during the months of January and July. The ENS and BP-19 form provides for notification of next of kin or other designee in the event of death or serious injury to an on duty member. If the computers are down, the officer in charge can access the personnel file hard copy Bp-19 form from either the fire department offices or the member's firehouse (Fire Department of New York, 2005).

To assist in organizing the LODD procedures, the Chief of Department can utilize the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Line of Duty Death Action Checklist (NFFF, 2007). The checklist is divided into two sections. The first section covers duties that should be carried out in the first 24 hours. Subsections include (a) notification, (b) family support, (c) department support, (d) dealing with the incident and (e) dealing with the community and the media. The second section covers from the second day until after the funeral. Subsections include recommendations for (a) funeral/ memorial service, (b) continued family support, and (c) continued department support. A copy of the NFFF action checklist can be found in Appendix B.

Current policies and procedures for a firefighter death in the WFD administrative policy manual are listed under the General Information chapter. Items included are: (a) Department

Funeral Procedures, (b) Relief Association Benefits and Information, and (c) Wichita Fire Department Honor Guard Funeral Procedures (Wichita Fire Department, 1988).

Death Notification

One of, if not, the most important, initial responsibilities in the line of duty death procedures is survivor notification. Death notification is the stressful duty of reporting to a survivor the unexpected death of a loved one (University of California San Francisco, 2007). It is important that death notifications be conducted as acceptably as possible because it is the critical point of shock for most survivors. If done well, it can begin a healing process. When it is done inappropriately it could generate severe emotional and psychological harm to the survivor, it may delay the process of grief recovery to the survivor for years. Professionals who are trained in the proper notification procedure do survivors an immeasurable service by minimizing additional trauma and sustaining victims through the shock and grief that follow (Lord, 2007).

Casualty notification isn't always conducted with compassion. Jim Sheeler (2005) interviewed U.S. Marine Major Steve Beck, a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer (CACO). He stated that several notification problems could be solved if everyone followed a simple principle:

To do this right, to do it properly, you have to look at these women as if they were your mother or your wife, and these men as if they were your father or your brother. And you have to ask, what would I want someone to do if it were me? (p.18)

A survey of 245 death notifiers (specifically; law enforcement officers, emergency medical technicians, victim advocates, coroners, clergy, health care professionals, and others who had performed death notification in the past) was conducted to examine their death notification experience and their needs for education. Forty-one percent of the notifiers had received neither classroom training nor practical training in death notification. Respondents reported needs for education included: (a) specific detail on how to deliver a notification, (b)

how to deal with survivor reaction, and (c) how to deal with their own emotional responses (Stewart, Lord, & Mercer, 2001). Dr. Kenneth Iseron suggests that by using death notification procedures, getting experience through occupational training and modeling experienced notifiers, the negative impact of death notification to survivors may be minimized (Iseron, 1999).

The notification process begins at the emergency scene or where the incident occurred. The incident commander is responsible for gathering and confirming the following information: (a) Firefighter's name, (b) Firefighter's company, (c) member status: deceased, missing, or injured, and (d) Hospital that injured firefighter is being transported (Fire Department of New York, 2005).

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (2007) suggests the following Five Principles of Notification: (a) in person, (b) in time with certainty, (c) in pairs, (d) in plain language, and (e) with compassion (NFFF, 2007). A detailed list of the five step procedure can be found in Appendix C.

Most notifications occur in the survivor's home, but they can happen anywhere. Two examples of the most likely locations, besides the home, that a notification could occur are in the work place, and in the hospital (Concerns for Police Survivors, 2007). A guideline of these two examples is shown in Appendix D.

The United States Fire Administration (2006) Firefighter Casualties report for 2005 stated that 80,100 injuries occurred to firefighter while on duty. Marine 1st Sergeant Steve Campbell was wounded in 1993 at the Grenada conflict. He is now a Casualty Assistance Calls Officer for the U.S. Marine Corps. He offers the following advice: "My wife was notified, so she gave me tips when the time came for me to make notification calls. She stressed over and over that if a soldier's wounded, just say 'He's alive' immediately" (Louis, 2003, p.20). In addition to the primary next of kin being notified in person, the Department of Defense procedures state that

initial notification(s) will also be made in person to parents who are the secondary next of kin by a uniformed representative (Department of Defense, 2000).

Post Notification Survivor and Member Support

After the death notification, the survivors many times experience shock and grief that can be intensified because the mourners have not a chance to say good bye or make amends. Funeral, financial situations, or other unfinished business are factors that can delay survivors from experiencing grief for a period of time and could extend and complicate the grieving period (Kittleson, Meyers, & Kane, 2005). Chief Paul Antonellis (2006) states: “The quality of the support the fire department provides to the survivors will have a tremendous impact on the grieving process” (p. 113). Grief is defined as an individual’s feelings and thoughts following a loss. Mourning is the outward expression of grief (Rainone, 2001).

To assist the survivors with decisions during this period the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (2007) has developed a guideline on how to provide support. The guideline has two detailed sections: (a) From time of death through the funeral, and (b) ongoing support after the funeral. The entire guideline can be viewed in Appendix E.

An important item to consider when assigning a Family Support Liaison (FSL) is that the member has had a relationship to the survivor and family. Experts advise that two or more members be assigned to the position. The intense grief of the situation can blur the boundaries of friendship and a survivor can become emotionally attached to the FSL. Having two or more members assigned to the FSL position makes sure that there is a “checks and balance” for everyone involved (Antonellis, 2006).

Psychological assistance should be offered to the survivor, family, and members of the department. Local critical incident stress management (CISM) teams, pastoral care, an employee assistance program for department members, and the local health department are all resources

that can be utilized (Antonellis & Mitchell, 2005). After a death many people turn to professional grief counselors for help in coming to grips with what has happened to them. Particularly if the death has been a traumatic one, people may benefit from attending support groups where they can discuss their loss with others. In addition the internet can serve as an extensive resource for those who are grieving (Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, n.d.).

A fire service survivor's network sponsored by the NFFF provides emotional assistance by matching survivors with similar experiences and circumstances. Survivors receive a quarterly newsletter and specialized grief resources. A website provides information on survivor benefits and other resources (NFFF, n.d.).

In keeping with its mission to help survivors as well as the dying, the website for the American Hospice Foundation (2005) provides an extensive list of organizations that offers specialized support to the dying and their survivors. For example the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) provides assistance to the families of firefighters and paramedics.

The Chief of Department should not neglect his/her own well being. In addition to emotional support from clergy, spouse, and close friends, a chief to chief network has been created by the NFFF. The network offers support and outreach from other chiefs who have dealt with line of duty deaths. It also provides technical assistance and personal support to help the department and the survivors (NFFF, n.d.).

Literature Review Summary

The literature review emphasized the importance to be prepared for a line of duty death. Overwhelming data found during this literary review influenced the research project by illustrating the importance for detailed line of duty death procedures. The existing literature reinforced the need for initial and ongoing support for the fallen firefighter's family and members of the fire department.

All of the literature reviewed supported a fire department's need to have preplanned line of duty death procedures, survivor notification guidelines, and post notification survivor support. This review also helped identify the importance of the survivor notification as a critical point of trauma for survivors.

Procedures

The research procedures used in preparing this paper consisted of: an initial literature review conducted at the Learning Resource Center, and the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation (NFFF) both located at the National Fire Academy in March of 2007; attendance of a seminar conducted by the NFFF entitled "Taking Care of Our Own" on line of duty death procedures in March of 2007; an additional literature review conducted at Wichita State University in April of 2007; a survey using a questionnaire type format was conducted in June of 2007 with analysis of that data completed in July 2007; and a personal interview conducted in July 2007 with Charlie Keeton, Chief of Training, WFD.

The objective of the literature review, questionnaire, and personal interview were to collect and establish data to answer the research questions of this paper.

The research method was descriptive in nature due to identifying what information is currently available and being used in the fire service and other organizations.

An internal questionnaire (Appendix F) was developed to gather information from WFD command staff personnel for the purpose of providing internal customer service to the members of the department and their families. A draft questionnaire was prepared from the research questions and information obtained in the literature review. The draft questionnaire was tested with the assistance of two senior battalion chiefs, with 35 and 40 years of service respectively, that have been involved in a line of duty death intimately.

The internal questionnaire was conducted on June 5, 2007 at a command staff meeting at WFD firehouse #1. The questionnaire consisted of 9 closed-ended, 1 forced-choice, and 1 open ended questions. The questionnaire obtained valid data from all 15 command staff officers within the WFD and 7 out of 15 battalion chief candidates for a total of 22 respondents. The WFD command staff officers are designated as the individuals who are responsible to organize and carry out line of duty death procedures for the department. A cover letter with instructions was attached to the questionnaire with a return date of July 1, 2007. All of the internal questionnaires were returned for a 100 percent response rate.

An interview with Charlie Keeton (Appendix G) was conducted in his office lasting approximately one hour on July 16, 2007. The goal of the interview was to gain information that would give background information on past survivor notifications and what improvements, if any, could be made to assist with answering research questions 1, 2, and 3.

Limitations

The literature reviewed for this ARP was assumed to be factual, objective, and unbiased. The surveys had some limitations that are relevant. One limitation was the confinement of the questionnaire to just WFD chief officers and battalion chief candidates. Any officer on the WFD could potentially be faced with the duties of a LODD. A final limitation is that the reliability of the respondent's answers could not be authenticated for every questionnaire.

Definition of Terms

Next of Kin (NOK): The person most closely related to the casualty is considered primary NOK for disposition of remains, personal effects, and the release of records to secondary NOK and third parties.

Line of duty death (LODD): The death of a fire department employee while on duty or resulting from an injury or illness that occurred while on duty.

Serious injury (SI): An injury or illness that requires immediate transport to a hospital in critical condition.

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team: A group of emergency service and mental health professionals trained to provide counseling after an emotionally stressful work related incident.

Liaison: An individual or group responsible for coordinating activities and communications between different groups or individuals.

Results

Research Questions

Research question 1. What pre line of duty death preparations should be utilized by the WFD? The Literature review found data supporting updated policy and procedures that should be established to support WFD members that are assigned line of duty death responsibilities. An incident management system (IMS) should be included in LODD policy and procedures to insure that no steps are left out (Antonellis, 2006). The LODD organizational structure should include: (a) LODD Incident Commander, (b) Survivor Notification team, (c) Family Support Team, (d) Hospital Liaison, (e) Public Information Officer, (f) Benefits Coordinator, (g) Funeral Coordinator, and (h) Investigation Team (NFFF, 2007). Eighteen out of twenty-two (82%) respondents of the questionnaire (Appendix F) reported they would be comfortable with a preplanned incident management system.

The questionnaire (Appendix F) sent to all WFD command staff reported that all twenty-two (100%) of the respondents agreed that a preplanned detailed checklist would be beneficial. The literature review supported this data from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundations LODD action checklist (NFFF, n.d.) . Results from the questionnaire can be found in Table 1.

The interview with Chief Keeton supported guidelines, and checklists to assist with critical duties, is presented in Appendix G.

An employee emergency contact information form (EEI) is one of the most critical pieces of information initially in a line of duty death (Mitrano III, 2005). The respondents to the questionnaire (Appendix F) felt that the current WFD EEI form is adequate. Nineteen out of twenty-two responses (86%) were satisfied with the current form.

The literature review data indicated that education and training were important before an LODD (NFFF, 2007). The internal questionnaire (Appendix F) found 18 out of 22 (82%) respondents answered that annual LODD education and training would be beneficial. Chief Keeton in his interview (Appendix G) stated training and education would have assisted him with LODD duties .

Research Question 2. What components should be included in a WFD survivor notification guideline? The literature review found that a guideline reviewed before making a notification is an essential tool to assist the fire department personnel. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (2007) developed a guideline (Appendix C) to assist notification officers. The five principles of notification are (a) In person, (b) in time, (c) in pairs, (d) in plain language, and (f) with compassion.

The responses from the questionnaire (Appendix F) agree with the information found in the literature review. Nineteen out of twenty-two (86%) respondents felt that training in making a death notification would be beneficial. A team approach to survivor notification was preferred by respondents with nineteen out of out of twenty-two responses (86%) favored a team approach which concurs with the literature review data. The question of who should deliver a survivor notification was a forced choice response. The choices were: (a) Chief of Department (64%), (b) Command Staff (68%), (c) Company Officer (13%), (d) Chaplin (55%), and (e) Other (18%).

The respondents that chose answer (e) wrote in friend or coworker. Results from the questionnaire can be found in Table 1.

The interview with Chief Keeton mirrored the information found in the literature review and the internal questionnaire (Appendix F). He stated that he did not know what to say or knew of any procedures to follow. He said he wanted to do the notification because of the close friendship between Chief Kersting and himself, but he had no prior training or education on line of duty death notification procedures. When asked if he would prefer a team approach or individual participation in a survivor notification, he stated that a team approach is critical. When he notified Chief Kersting's wife that he had died, he was with WFD Battalion Chief Dan McClure. Chief McClure assisted Chief Kersting's son who was his mother. Chief Keeton stated having another notification officer with him for support was vital.

Research question 3. How should the WFD provide support to the survivors and members of the department? The research conducted during the literature review, internal questionnaire, and the interview with Chief Keeton indicated that initial and ongoing support should be provided through: (a) preplanned guidelines to assist the survivors, (b) psychological assistance should be offered to the survivors and members of the department, and (c) contact the NFFF's Chief to Chief Network and Fire Service Survivors Network using the internet (NFFF, 2007).

One question on the questionnaire was open ended to ask if there were any other additions to the line of duty death policy and procedures that should be considered. Twenty out of twenty-two (90%) of the respondents wrote in that some type of counseling should be offered to the survivors and members of the department. Results of the questionnaire can be found in Table 1.

The interview with Chief Keeton agreed with the literature review that most departments fail at providing support after the notification. When asked if the WFD offered any support after

Chief Kersting's funeral he stated that members offered individually, but not as a department. He believed having a team assigned to check in with the family for the first year after the death would support the family a great deal. One point Chief Keeton made was that he believed a financial advisor for the family would be very beneficial. With all of the benefits being provided by organizations, it can become confusing to the survivor making important financial decisions. When asked if he had participated in a debriefing after Chief Kersting's funeral, he said he was not asked.

Table 1

<u>Questionnaire Results for WFD Command Staff Officers</u>						
<u>Questions</u>	<u>Yes</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>%</u>
<u>Detailed preplanned checklist</u>	22	100%	0	0%		
<u>Death notification training</u>	19	86%	3	14%		
<u>Current LODD policy satisfactory</u>	4	18%	17	77%	1	5%
<u>Annual LODD training beneficial</u>	18	82%	4	18%		
<u>IMS for LODD assignments</u>	18	82%	4	18%		
<u>Team survivor death notification</u>	19	86%	1	5%	2	9%
<u>Annual LODD policy reviewed</u>	19	86%	3	14%		
<u>Participated in LODD notification</u>	5	22%	17	77%		
<u>Current EEI form adequate</u>	19	86%	2	9%	1	5%
<u>Who should make notification</u>	A. Chief of Department				14	64%
	B. Command Staff				15	68%
	C. Company Officer				3	13%
	D. Chaplin				12	55%
	E. Other				4	18%

Discussion

Through the review of related literature, the questionnaire results, and the interview, the author corroborates what other fire departments have discovered. That the priority of a line of duty death must be the professionalism of the fire department to carry out its responsibility to provide support for the fallen firefighter's survivors and members of the organization.

Emergency service organizations should provide: (a) pre-incident preparation, (b) respectful survivor notification, and (c) support for survivors and fire department members.

There are deficiencies in the current WFD line of duty death policy and procedures in regards to providing initial and ongoing support for the survivors and members of the department. This can be corrected with: (a) education, training, and preplanned guidelines; (b) notification procedures with a checklist; and (c) support structures to provide initial and on going care to the survivors and members of the department.

Being prepared for any incident by training and having guidelines to follow has been one of the foundations of the fire service (Patrick, 2005). The literature review indicated that line of duty death pre-incident preparation makes a statement to the organization and to the fallen firefighter's survivors that the fire department is concerned about their long term care and well being (Antonellis, 2006). The International Critical Stress Foundation (2002) reports "The administrative and logistical aspects of a line of duty death are often overwhelming to those agencies that are ill prepared"(p.1). Having procedures in place makes it much easier for everyone involved; the family, the fire department, and the community (NFFF, n.d.)

Preplanning leads to lack of confusion, it provides support in a sensitive and timely manner, and to be better prepared for a tragic event (John McGrath, personal conversation, March 10, 2007). The internal questionnaire (Appendix F) agreed with the literature review with all of the respondents (100%) reporting that a preplanned detailed checklist would assist them

with a line of duty death. Charlie Keeton indicated in his interview that a checklist of duties would be valuable to assist members with line of duty death procedures. The literature review supports the results section. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (2007) has a line of duty death action checklist to assist in organizing procedures and can be viewed in Appendix B.

The literature review revealed that there are several exceptional policy and procedure guidelines that can be customized to a fire department's organizational structure (NFFF, 2007). The author found that the military, police organizations, and the fire service were the core group of organizations that have policy and procedures already in place for a sudden employee death. The internal questionnaire (Appendix F) agreed with the findings of the literature review with the majority (82%) of the respondents reporting that line of duty death education and training would be beneficial to the WFD command staff. The interview with Charlie Keeton (Appendix G) stated policy and procedure guidelines would have been beneficial to him during Chief Kersting's on duty death.

The literature review found numerous sources including Lord (2007), Sheeler (2005), and Iserson (1999), that details the importance of a proper survivor death notification. Survivor death notification is one of, if not, the most important initial responsibilities in a line of duty death. The majority of respondents (86%) to the questionnaire felt that training in making a death notification to a member's next of kin would be beneficial (Table 1). Charlie Keeton stated in his interview (Appendix G) that he did not know what to say to the survivors because he had no training or procedures to refer to in the WFD policy and procedures manuals.

The author found two resources during the literature review that had guidelines to follow in making a survivor death notification. The first was the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (2007) Five Principles of Notification. The second was the Concerns for Police Survivors (n.d.) that has additional guidelines to make a notification in a workplace or hospital setting. The

respondents to the questionnaire reported that the majority (86%) would prefer a team approach that coincides with NFFF's (2007) Five Principles of Notification.

Several sources found in the literature review reported that the Chief of Department should be present at the survivor death notification. The internal questionnaire (Appendix F) offered a forced choice question of who should deliver a survivor death notification. The majority of the respondents reported that the Chief of Department, a Command Staff Officer, or a Chaplain should be present at the notification. Several respondents chose all three to be present. Charlie Keeton stated in the interview that he wanted to do the survivor death notification because of his close friendship to Chief Kersting, but having two notification officers present was a great asset.

The employee emergency contact information form is a critical piece of information for the fire department to make notification of survivors in the event of a line of duty death (Mitrano III, 2005). The questionnaire reported that the majority of the respondents (86%) felt the current employee emergency contact information form was adequate (Table 1).

The results section as well the literature review indicates that the time that most fire departments fail to support survivors and department members in line of duty death procedures is after the funeral. Paul Antonellis (2006) states "The quality of support the fire department provides to the survivors will have a tremendous impact on the grieving process"(p.113). The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation (2007) has developed guidelines to assist fire departments with the needs of the survivor and members of the department. During the interview, the author asked Charlie Keeton if the WFD offered any departmental ongoing support with Chief Kersting's line of duty death. Chief Keeton stated that the WFD did not offer organization support, but department members individually offered support.

The author reviewed articles in the literature review that suggested psychological assistance should be offered to: the survivor, the extended family, and members of the fire department (Antonellis & Mitchell, 2005). The American Hospice Foundation (2005) provides an extensive list of organizations that offers specialized support. Charlie Keeton stated in his interview that he was not asked to participate in a Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) debriefing. The author notes that the WFD, Wichita Police Department, and Sedgwick County EMS have a CISM team, but no one contacted Chief Keeton.

The author's interpretation of the research study results are that the original research agrees with the findings of others that the priority of the fire department during a line of duty death should be to honor the fallen firefighter and provide the best possible support to the survivors and department members.

This research study has several organizational implications. First, to gauge the effectiveness of current WFD line of duty death policy and procedures in relation to overall support for survivors and members of the department. Second, to determine what methods could be utilized to provide the support that the line of duty death survivors and department members deserves. Finally, to assist the WFD members responsible for line of duty death assignments by providing training and education; survivor notification guidelines; checklists of line of duty death management responsibilities; and ongoing line of duty death survivor and department member support activities.

Recommendations

WFD administration should adopt supplemental procedures to improve and enhance support for the line of duty death guidelines of the organization.

Based on the data presented in results section, the WFD should implement changes in the way the organization conducts a line of duty death. The author proposes additional content added

to the current line of duty death policy and procedures that should include pre-incident preparation, survivor notification, and continuous support for the survivors and department members.

The organizational benefits that would result from the changes recommended would be many. WFD members and their families would be better cared for and supported in their critical time of need. WFD personnel assigned LODD duties would be better prepared. Detailed LODD support procedures divided into IMS sections to distribute the responsibilities of the event. The WFD is always striving to provide external customer service to the community. By having these recommendations implemented the WFD is providing internal customer service and peace of mind to its members.

Annual review of the line of duty death procedures should be implemented to keep abreast of new technology and techniques to assist the WFD. Additionally, after a line of duty death, an after action review should be conducted to evaluate how well duties were performed, and if the WFD could do a better job.

The author proposes the following recommendations. First, the WFD would be providing better internal customer service to the employees and their families. Second, to provide detailed policy and procedural additions to the existing line of duty death guidelines. Third, to provide line of duty death education and training for command staff members. Fourth, to secure support from outside agencies such as psychologists, business leaders, and financial planners. Fifth, to formalize guidelines and checklists into updated line of duty death procedures. Finally, to have guidelines and checklists available to the Command Staff at all times.

In conclusion, the author recommends to other researchers to review your department's current line of duty death policy and procedures. Survey the members of your department that will actually have to perform line of duty death procedures to evaluate for themselves if they feel

the current guidelines are adequate. The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, as well as the other references provided in this study, are excellent resources to support fire department members and their families.

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Appendix A

NFFF Planning Considerations for a Line-of-Duty Death

The Foundation has compiled elements from several plans that address line-of-duty death procedures. These sample elements reflect how various departments have prepared to deal with the tragedy of a line-of-duty death. These are by no means the only things that can be done.

These elements can help you establish the basis for a plan for your department.

Elements	Sample Elements from Existing Department Plans
1. Policy	<p>A. It will be the responsibility of (department name) to provide assistance to immediate survivors</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>B. This plan recognizes that the goal of (department name) is to help people and provide assistance at every opportunity. This includes assisting the department's fire service family, specially when a member suffers a serious injury or dies in the line of duty.</p>
2. Purpose	<p>A. The purpose of this policy is to direct (dept) to provide proper care for the deceased firefighter's family. The FAMILY should make all decisions regarding funeral arrangements, with their wishes taking precedence over those of the department.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>B. The purpose of this policy is to offer assistance to all members of the department's fire service family after a line-of-duty death. This policy will help the department prepare for and respond to circumstances in a professional and compassionate manner.</p>

3. Definitions
- A. Line-of-duty death: A death which is the direct result of taking any reasonable or emergency response acting that an active firefighter is authorized or obligated to perform.
 - B. Survivors: Immediate family members including spouses; all children, including stepchildren and legally-adopted children; parents; siblings; and significant others.
 - C. Benefits: Financial payments, scholarships, tax benefits, and special programs available to the immediate next-of-kin of the fallen firefighter.

You may want to add other definitions based on the specificity of the plan.

1. Establishing an Incident Management Team

The department's Family Support Team will be responsible for necessary functions before, during, and after the funeral. The Chief will activate the team as needed, based on Department resources. Members of the team will handle the following responsibilities:

1. Liaison between the team and the chief
2. Overall coordination of the team
3. Benefits coordination; only one department member should be authorized to work with the family on death benefits
4. Transportation and lodging coordination for out-of-town family members
5. Media coordination to release information about the incident, arrange media coverage of the funeral or memorial service, and provide privacy to the family.
6. Hospital liaison to relay information between medical personnel and the family.
7. Funeral or memorial service coordination including services and burial arrangements, traffic, honor guard, etc.

8. Family liaison to provide personal support for the immediate family, usually at the home. Personal support includes duties such as screening calls and visits, providing local transportation, assisting with burial arrangements, etc.

2. Notifying Survivors

The department will establish a notification policy for survivors of fallen firefighters. This will include the following elements:

1. Getting all department members to provide emergency contact information and updating the information annually. This will allow members to name a member of the department who should be part of the notification team.
2. Designating senior department personnel, and backups, who will make the notification.
3. Notifying immediate family members in person before release of any information to anyone else. If members live out of the area, make arrangements for in person notification by the local department.
4. Having two members of the department make the notification. Don't hold up notification if the designated department members are not readily available.
5. If needed, driving family members to the hospital in a department vehicle and getting them to the proper area. If the family wants to drive their own car, have a member of the department accompany them.

3. Notifying Members of the Department

Once the family has been notified, members of the department should learn of the incident from the department before they hear about it through the media. The department will establish procedures to ensure this notification, including:

1. Notifying all on- and off-duty chief officers
2. Notifying all chaplains

3. Preparing a short summary of know facts about the incident and the deceased and/or critically injured for the Chief and all other spokespersons to use
 4. Working with the personnel officer, to confirm the basic information about the firefighter(s), including:
 - Correct spelling of name
 - Age
 - Next of kin
 5. Preparing a memo to all members of the department that includes confirmed information
 6. Establishing procedures to notify off-duty members
 7. Keeping all members informed of funeral arrangements and memorial services
4. Notifying Others

Other members of the community need to be notified after the family and the members of the department. Each community will need to tailor this list to its unique circumstances.

However, the plan should include the following elements:

1. Making sure a short summary of know facts about the incident and the deceased and/or critically injured is available for the Chief and all other spokespersons to use
2. Establishing a priority checklist of whom to call that includes name and title, office and home contact information, etc.

For example:

1. Elected officials
2. Employee Association official
3. Safety Officer
4. Public Safety Officers' Benefits staff

5. Fire service organizations

5. Working with the Media

The department should take steps to ensure notification of the family before giving any information to the media. Procedures to follow include:

1. Giving no personal information out to the media, even if they are on the scene, until confirmation that family notification has occurred.
2. Using the basic information gathered on the incident and the deceased and/or critically injured. (Refer to Component 3 – Notifying Members of the Department)
3. Preparing and clearing a written statement for the Chief to deliver or release.
4. Setting up a media briefing, either at the hospital or other location
5. Designating a department backup to handle coverage of the incident if it is still ongoing so the primary PIO can concentrate on handling information on the fatality.

6. Dealing with the Hospital

The critically-injured firefighter will be transported to a local hospital. The department will establish procedures to deal with local hospitals. This will include the following elements.

1. Meeting with hospital officials to discuss appropriate waiting areas for family, coworkers, and the media should a line-of-duty death occur.
2. Use EMS personnel who know hospital personnel and procedures as a resource.
3. Ensuring that the hospital information liaison has access to medical personnel to obtain information for the family and to provide approved information to the media coordinator.

4. Having a member of the department available to the family at all times to assist them and ensure their privacy.
5. Assigning a member of the department to ensure collection of the deceased's personal property.
6. Arranging transportation for the family back to their residence.

If the critically-injured firefighter must be transported to a medical center out of the local area, the department will establish procedures to assist the family in that location.

These include:

1. Helping arrange transportation for the firefighter and the family, as required.
 2. Contacting fire department officials in that area and arranging support for the family.
7. Establishing a Community Response Network

The department will set up a community response network that can be activated if a tragedy occurs. This would include:

1. Working with the Highway Patrol on providing or escorting family members from out of town.
2. Contacting local funeral homes to determine if they defer funeral costs and offer burial plots for line-of-duty deaths of public safety officers.
3. Working with local hotels, motels and restaurants to provide lodging and meals for families attending the funeral.
4. Finding childcare providers to assist families with small children during this period.
5. Identifying local banks that will provide services to the family for handling donations and other death-related transactions.

8. Assisting the Family Before and During the Funeral

The department will ensure that the family's wishes come first. The department will establish procedures, including:

1. Meeting with the family to explain what support the department can offer.
2. Giving the family a pager or cell phone number where a fire service liaison can be reached at any time.
3. Providing information on different options for funeral arrangements, including a full honors fire service funeral.
4. If the family chooses to have a private service, working with them as requested.
5. If the family chooses to have a private service, working with them as requested.
6. Requesting local law enforcement officials to make routine checks on the family's residence for several weeks.
7. Assisting with household responsibilities such as running errands, mowing the lawn, answering the phone, etc.

9. Providing Benefit Information to the Family

The department will maintain an up-to-date list of death benefits available to survivors.

The department will establish procedures on assisting the family, including:

1. Assigning a benefits coordinator to handle all contact with survivors. The department will establish procedures on assisting the family, including:
 2. Providing a list of financial planners and legal advisors whom the survivors may want to contact.
- ## 10. Assisting the Family After the Funeral

The department will maintain contact with the family and establish procedures to ensure ongoing support, including:

1. Continuing to invite the family to department events
2. Ensuring all death benefits have been processed
3. Offering assistance with household maintenance, yard work, etc. as appropriate
4. Calling or checking in on a regular basis
5. Considering the establishment of a permanent tribute such as scholarship, dedication of a facility, etc.
6. Referring the family to the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for information on its Fire Service Support Network
7. Helping the family attend the national and state memorial services.
8. Staying part of major events such as graduations, weddings, etc.

Appendix B

NFFF Line of Duty Death Action Checklist

Notification

- _____ Assign a 2-person team to notify the firefighter's family, in person, before releasing any information.
- _____ Notify all on- and off-duty personnel, including chaplain.
- _____ Notify elected officials and other key people in the community of the death.
- _____ Notify all other fire chiefs in the jurisdiction.
- _____ Notify the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program office.

Family Support

- _____ Designate a family support liaison (team) and offer to stay with the family around the clock.
- _____ Designate a hospital liaison, if appropriate.
- _____ Meet with the family to explain support the fire department can provide and any immediate support they can offer. Be prepared to explain why an autopsy may be required.

- _____ Collect the deceased firefighter's department belongings to give to the family later. Inventory and document in the presence of a witness. If some belongings will be held during investigation, explain this to the family.

Department Support

- _____ Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Chief-to-Chief Network as needed for assistance.
- _____ Arrange critical incident debriefing for the department.

Dealing with the Incident

- _____ Determine the type of firefighter fatality investigation to conduct in addition to the NIOSH investigation (i.e., internal or external board of inquiry; arson-, accident- or homicide-related).
- _____ Contact the departmental or jurisdictional attorney regarding possible legal issues.

Dealing with the Community and the Media

- _____ Prepare a summary of facts about the firefighter and the incident to use for public release of information.
- _____ Prepare a written statement for the chief or spokesperson to release to the media.
- _____ Hold a briefing with the media.

DAY TWO THROUGH THE FUNERAL

Funeral/Memorial Service

- _____ Assist the family in planning the funeral as they choose.
- _____ Continue to inform department members of the details regarding the incident and the funeral/memorial service plans.
- _____ Coordinate plans for fire department participation in funeral.

Family Support

- _____ Request that local law enforcement officials make routine checks of the family's residence during the funeral and for several weeks afterwards.
- _____ Assist the family with tasks related to home maintenance, transportation of out-of-town family and friends, childcare, etc.

Department Support

- _____ Monitor department members closest to the incident to see how they are dealing with the loss.

AFTER THE FUNERAL

Family Support

- _____ Continue to invite the family to department events and activities.
- _____ Provide assistance with routine tasks (home maintenance, running errands, etc.)
- _____ Assign someone to assist the family in accessing all benefits for which they are eligible.

_____ Offer to “be there” at special times/events (children’s activities, holidays, etc.)

Department Support

_____ Assist department members in accessing additional support, as needed.

Memorials and Tributes

_____ Inform and include families in local, state, and national tributes to the firefighter.

_____ Make the family aware of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and its support programs for fire service survivors.

_____ Plan to attend the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend and to send an escort and honor guard unit for the family

Department Issues/Planning

_____ Update Emergency Contact Information for all department members.

_____ Create or revise the department’s Line-of-Duty Death plan.

Appendix C

The National Fallen Firefighter's Foundation (2007) Five Principles of Notification:

1. In Person

- (a) Always do the notification in person, never by phone.
- (b) For family members living out of the local area, arrange for authorities in that area to make the notification in person.
- (c) Immediately find the firefighter's emergency contact information to know who needs to be notified in person.

2. In Time and with Certainty

- (a) Before making notification, have positive identification of the deceased firefighter. Obviously, errors in identity can cause extreme trauma.
- (b) Never discuss a fatality over the radio. This may result in a family member receiving the news before you can notify them in person.
- (c) Quickly gather as much information about the incident as possible before making the notification. Survivors will likely have questions.
- (d) Get to the survivors quickly. Don't let the media notify them first.

3. In Pairs

- (a) Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions when they learn of the death.
- (b) Use the employee's emergency contact information to identify a uniformed member of the fire service to accompany the department's representative. It is helpful to have the department chaplain or a friend of the firefighter's family, too.

- (c) Take two vehicles, if possible. This will allow one of you to take a survivor to the hospital, if necessary, while the second person stays with other survivors.
- (d) Before you arrive, decide who will speak and what that person will say.

4. In Plain Language

- (a) Clearly identify yourself, present identification, and then ask to come in.
- (b) Notification should take place in a private setting.
- (c) If you don't know the family member, make sure you are talking to the right person.
- (d) Begin with "I have very bad news," or "I'm so sorry to have to tell you this."
- (e) Use the words "died" and "dead" rather than terms such as "passed away" so the message is absolutely clear. Speak slowly. Get to the point quickly.
- (f) Calmly answer the survivor's questions. It is fine to say, "I don't know" if you don't.
- (g) Use his or her name when referring to the firefighter, rather than saying "the body."

With Compassion

- (a) Allow survivors to express emotion. Do not try to talk them out of their grief.
- (b) Accept your own emotions. It's okay if you cry during notification, but stay calm.

- (c) Never leave immediately after making a notification. Offer to help the survivor call friends or family members. Do not leave before someone else arrives.
- (d) Do not take firefighter's personal items with you when you make a notification. Tell the family they will receive them later. Most survivors will need some time before they feel able to deal with these items.
- (e) Provide the survivor the opportunity to see the deceased firefighter, even if the body is badly disfigured. Offer to transport the family to where the firefighter is, and help prepare them for what they will see.
- (f) Before leaving, write down important information, including the names and phone numbers of the department personnel who will work with the family.
- (g) Have one member of the department stay with the family, unless the family declines.

Appendix D

Concerns for Police Survivors Work Place & Hospital Notification

In a work place setting the following guidelines are recommended:

- (a) Ask to speak to the manager or supervisor, and ask if the person to be notified is available. It isn't necessary to divulge any details regarding the purpose of your visit.
- (b) Ask the manager or supervisor to arrange for a private room in which to make the notification.
- (c) Follow the basic notification procedures described above: in person, in time, in pairs, in plain language, with compassion.
- (d) Allow time for the survivor to react and offer your support.
- (e) Transport the survivor to his or her home, or to the hospital.
- (f) Let the survivor determine what he or she wishes to tell the manager or supervisor regarding the death. Offer to notify the supervisor, if that is what the survivor prefers.

Hospital Notification

In a hospital setting the following guidelines are recommended:

- (a) Find a quiet room for the notification and be sure survivors are seated. (Do not notify in a crowded hall or waiting room.)
- (b) Arrange for a doctor to be present or available shortly to answer medical questions.
- (c) Inform simply and directly. (d) Provide assistance and guidance: Ask if survivors wish to spend time with the body of the deceased.
- (e) Explain the procedure if identification of the deceased is necessary. Explain about autopsy or organ donation, if appropriate.
- (f) Volunteer to help notify others. Make a list of any calls made.

Appendix E

NFFF Survivor Support Guidelines

From Time of Death through the Funeral

1. Notify the Department of Justice of the death. This will begin the process of reviewing the eligibility for the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program.
2. Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation about the death. This will assure the beginning of emotional support for both the family and the department.
3. 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 department can still hold a memorial service.
4. If the family wants a fire service funeral, secure a uniform for the burial.
5. If there are children in the family, consider creating a special role for them, such as riding on the fire truck in the funeral procession. (Be sure and ask a parent before mentioning this to the children!)
6. Offer to assist with lodging or transportation for out of town relatives and friends.
7. Offer to have a member of the department stay with the family prior to the funeral.
8. Have someone available for tasks such as answering the phone, driving the family to the funeral home to make arrangements, or running errands.
9. Help coordinate household duties such as food preparation, cleaning, and childcare or pet care. Do necessary maintenance such as mowing the grass or cleaning the snow. Arrange for trash collection.
10. If donations are collected for the family, set up a bank account to deposit these funds.
11. Coordinate with local law enforcement officials to make routine checks of the residence and neighborhood.

12. Assign a department member to help the family set guidelines for dealing with the media.

Ongoing Support

1. Only promise what you can do. Keep all your promises.
2. Instead of saying “call if you need anything” offer to help with specific tasks and then follow through.
3. Continue to talk with the family about your memories of the firefighter. Most families want to hear about their loved one, even if it is emotionally difficult.
4. Remember that parents of a fallen firefighter need support and contact just like spouses and children do.
5. Help with what the firefighter used to do- yard work, fixing things around the house, attending children’s sports and school events, etc.
6. Take all steps necessary to secure benefits for the family. The process is often lengthy, so keep the family involved.
7. Continue to invite the family to department events, but don’t be disappointed if they don’t always attend.
8. Remember that some events, such as holidays and the anniversary of the date of death may especially difficult for the family. Even families who seem to be doing well may need extra support and contact during these times.
9. Contact the family before releasing any information on investigations, incident reports, etc.
10. Consider creating some kind of tribute to the fallen firefighter. This could be a local memorial, a video tribute, a scrapbook, or a scholarship in the firefighter’s name.

Prepare a tribute that is fitting for your firefighter and special to the family.

11. Provide survivors with information on the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's programs for survivors. Contact the Foundation to get support for the family.
12. Encourage the family to attend the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial Weekend and other local, state, and national tributes. Offer to help make travel arrangements and attend with them whenever possible.
13. Continue to ask family members what would help them the most (NFFF, 2007).

Appendix F

Cover Letter & Internal Questionnaire

Chief:

I am a student in the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. I am currently enrolled in the course titled Executive Development, and one of the requirements of the course is a research paper. I am reviewing our fire department's policy and procedures that apply to Line of Duty Death/Serious Injury (LODD/SI), and I am asking for your assistance.

If you could take the time to complete the questionnaire attached to this cover letter after your staff meeting I would really appreciate it. If you cannot fill out the survey now a self addressed stamped envelope will be provided. A return date of July 1st, 2007 is requested.

Please do not put your name on the questionnaire to provide confidentiality and anonymity.

The results of this survey will be available upon request.

Your help with this information will assist in providing internal customer service to our members and their families. Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.

Respectfully,

Sid Newby, Captain

Wichita Fire Department

Wichita Fire Department

Line of Duty Death/Serious Injury Questionnaire

Line-of-Duty Death definition: The death of a fire department employee while on duty or resulting from an injury or illness that occurred while on duty.

Serious Injury definition: An injury or illness that requires immediate transport to a hospital in critical condition (code red).

1. Would a preplanned detailed checklist assist you if you were selected to assist with a line-of -duty death/serious injury (LODD/SI)? Yes or No
2. Do you feel that training in making a death notification to a member's next of kin would be beneficial? Yes or No
3. Do you feel the current Wichita Fire Department line-of-duty death policy and procedures are satisfactory?
Yes or No
4. Do you feel annual line-of-duty death education and training would be beneficial to the Wichita Fire Department Command Staff (Chief Officers)? Yes or No
5. Would you feel comfortable with a preplanned incident management system for line-of duty death assignments? Yes or No
6. Would you prefer a team approach or individual participation in the family notification process? Yes or No
7. Should the LODD/SI policy and procedures be reviewed annually?
Yes or No
8. Have you participated in a LODD/SI family notification? Yes or No

9. Who do you think should deliver a LODD/SI family notification? (you can circle more than one)

- a) Chief Of Department
- b) Command Staff (Deputy Chief, Battalion Chief)
- c) Company Officer
- d) Chaplin
- e) Other

10. Is the Wichita Fire Department current employee emergency information form (EEL) adequate?

Yes or No

11. Are there any other additions to the LODD/SI policy and procedures that you feel should be considered?

Appendix G

Personal Interview with Charlie Keeton

Date: July 16, 2007

Time: Approximately 1300 to 1400

Place: Wichita, Kansas

Name: Charlie Keeton

Current Position: Wichita Fire Department Chief of Training

Professional Experience/Background and Experience: “I have been employed by the Wichita Fire Department for 33 years. In 2004, Battalion Chief Don Kersting, a very close friend and fellow member of the WFD died on duty. I delivered the death notification to his wife and was the department liaison to the family.”

Did you feel prepared to make a death notification? “No, I did not know what to say. I didn’t have any procedures or training to refer to.”

Was it more difficult being a close friend to the fallen firefighter to make the death notification? “It was difficult, but I wanted to be the one to make the death notification because of my close relationship to Don and his family”.

Did you feel overwhelmed with the line of duty death responsibilities and what could have assisted you with the process? “Yes, especially having assistance in establishing details for the funeral would have been very helpful. Having an organizational structure to assist with meetings

with the survivors, the fire department, the funeral director and so on to try to make sure that the family's wishes were carried out.”

Did the current WFD line of duty death policy and procedures assist you with LODD duties?

“No.”

Would you prefer an individual or team approach to survivor notification? If yes Why? “A team approach. In the notification that I was involved in, Don's wife and son were together. Having another WFD chief officer there to assist by talking with Don's son while I spoke to Don's wife was very helpful.”

Who do you think should deliver a survivor death notification? A command staff officer and the person listed on the employee's emergency contact information form if it doesn't delay the notification process.

Would a preplanned detailed checklist have assisted you with Chief Kersting's line of duty death? “Yes, the more detailed the better, from the notification, through the funeral, and afterwards.”

After Chief Kersting's funeral did the WFD offer any on going support? “No, not as an organization, but individuals offered personal support. For instance the Deputy Chief of Operations asked several times if he could do anything to help out.”

Do you feel the WFD assisted you, as the liaison, with the responsibility of assisting the family?

“Yes, but a structured guideline to provide initial and ongoing support could have been helpful to everyone involved.”

What, if anything, would you suggest for ongoing support? “To have a professional financial advisor assist the family with all the monetary benefits and advise the survivor on the best financial strategy for their situation. This would not take the place of a fire department benefits coordinator. I think it should be provided for at least for the first year after a line of duty death. Maybe someone in the business community would volunteer their services.”