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OPERATIONS MANUAL

STANDARD INSTRUCTION 10 INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM

SECTION 24 SERIOUS INJURY AND LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH

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TITLE O P E R A T I O N S M A N U A L	STANDARD INSTRUCTION 10		DEPARTMENT F I R E - R E S C U E
SUBJECT: INJURY AND ILLNESS PREVENTION PROGRAM SERIOUS INJURY AND LINE OF DUTY DEATH	SECTION 24	PAGE 1 of 9	EFFECTIVE DATE 7 January 2021

I. PURPOSE

To provide procedures in case of the death or serious injury of a sworn member, to ensure the swift and compassionate notification of the family and provide procedures regarding the investigations into any line of duty death.

II. SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all and appointed San Diego Fire-Rescue Department (SDFD) personnel.

III. AUTHORITY

The fire chief authorizes the information within this policy.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. Agency/Department: This term is intended to include Fire, Lifeguard, and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) personnel from the SDFD, active and retired, sworn and non-sworn, who are or were involved in emergency operations and/or administrative duties.
- B. Chief Officer: A firefighter of the rank of battalion chief or higher, or a lifeguard of the rank marine safety lieutenant or higher.
- C. Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC) Battalion Chief (BC): This is a chief officer assigned to the ECDC who acts as the initial point of contact for all serious injuries and line-of-duty death (LODD) notifications.
- D. Family Liaison Officer (FLO): A close family friend in the department who acts as a link between the family and the department or division. This person assists the family during the funeral/memorial process and helps the family determine how much involvement the department will have. This position is assigned by the fire chief, lifeguard chief or designee. If needed, the FLO may be assigned an assistant. The FLO should be assigned as soon as reasonably possible upon pronouncement of death, or anticipated pronouncement.
- E. Funeral Service: A ceremony or group of ceremonies held in connection with the burial or cremation of a dead person. A funeral service includes the physical presence of the body or remains of the deceased.
- F. Funeral/Memorial Services Officer: Coordinates all funeral or memorial related services.
- G. Hospital Officer: A chief officer or marine safety lieutenant or higher whose duties are to preserve patient confidentiality, establish a chain of custody, and ensure proper notification procedures are followed.
- H. Injured-on-Duty Death (IODD): Any actively employed sworn or appointed member of SDFD who dies during employment and the death is the result of an accidental non-emergency incident that occurred on duty.

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- I. Line-of-Duty Death (LODD): Any actively employed sworn or appointed member of the SDFD who dies during an emergency incident as the direct result of on duty emergency operations or because of state recognized incident-related presumptive causes, including suicide.
- J. Member: Any current employee or appointed volunteer of the SDFD.
- K. Memorial Service: A memorial service is one that occurs without the body. The services may take place within a day or two of death or can be delayed as long as needed to meet the convenience or needs of the family.
- L. Notification Officer: The SDFD chief officer (fire chief, lifeguard chief, or highest ranking available chief officer or marine safety captain) who makes the official notification of death to the family of the deceased.
- M. Notification Unit: Department members tasked with providing the swift and compassionate notification and support of the family of a seriously injured or deceased department member.
- N. Employee Emergency Contact Information: Form completed by all sworn and appointed members to ensure the family is properly notified in the event of their death or serious injury and provides the member's desires upon LODD or IODD.
- O. Purple Initial Actions Envelope: A packet of information kept by all members of the notification unit as well as all battalion chiefs, deputy chiefs, lifeguard sergeants, marine safety lieutenants, and marine safety captain vehicles. Used to guide the initial actions (12 to 24 hours) of the individuals responsible for the care and management of a seriously injured or deceased member.
- P. Serious Injury: Any injury sustained in the line-of-duty which is, or may become, life threatening or will disable the employee for a substantial period.

V. POLICY

The priority following a serious injury or line-of-duty death, after caring for the member or members, is the swift and compassionate notification of the injured or deceased member's family and extension of assistance and support.

More detailed information may be found in the Firefighter Funeral/Memorial Guidebook and Lifeguard Funeral/Memorial Guidebook.

A. Emergency Transportation of Sworn or Appointed SDFD Member

- 1. Any time a member sustains a severe injury or illness requiring immediate transportation to an emergency department, a chief officer shall accompany or meet the ill or injured member at the hospital ensuring the highest level of patient care.

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2. The chief officer enroute to the hospital shall notify the Emergency Command and Data Center (ECDC).
3. AT NO TIME SHALL THE NAME OF A SERIOUSLY INJURED OR DEAD FIRIFIGHTER BE GIVEN OVER THE RADIO.
4. All communications shall be conducted by telephone or other secured means.
5. ECDC will page the Health and Safety Office (HSO) group with injury information. HSO shall coordinate:
 - a. Chaplaincy and Peer Support Team
 - b. Injury and illness investigations (any and all investigations will be conducted, and be consistent with, the firefighters' procedural bill of rights act or police officers' procedural bill of rights act)
6. Upon arrival at the receiving facility the chief officer shall notify ECDC they have established the role of 'hospital officer'.
7. The primary duties of the hospital officer are to:
 - a. Preserve patient confidentiality
 - b. Establish a chain of custody of all items at the hospital (PPE, etc.) that may be used as evidence during the serious accident review
 - c. Ensure proper notification procedures are followed until relieved by a higher-ranking officer.
8. The hospital officer should coordinate with the Health and Safety Office as soon as possible.
Refer to the purple 'Serious Injury /LODD Initial Actions' Envelope for further details, initial action steps, and responsibilities of the hospital officer.
9. Upon patient turnover to emergency department staff, the hospital officer shall ensure that ECDC is immediately notified with the following information:
 - a. Employee name and rank
 - b. Assigned unit or work location
 - c. Nature and circumstances of injury/illness or death
 - d. Location of employee
 - e. Any known family members that are department or city employees
10. The hospital officer shall ensure a comfortable waiting area is available for the family of the injured or deceased member.
11. The hospital officer shall ensure the injured or deceased member is made as presentable as possible for the family.

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12. Upon pronouncement of death of a sworn member the hospital officer shall ensure that the medical examiner is made aware that any autopsy to be performed is consistent with the procedure described in the [Firefighter Autopsy Protocol](#), U.S. Fire Administration.

B. On-Scene Pronouncement of Death

In any circumstance when a member is pronounced dead on scene and is not transported to a hospital, the chief officer or incident commander at scene shall notify ECDC and await further instruction from ECDC or a higher-ranking officer.

C. Automatic IODD and LODD Procedures

1. Upon pronouncement of serious injury or death of a member, all items that may be used during the forthcoming investigation shall be secured and preserved as evidence by the incident commander. Examples of evidence to be secured include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Injured/deceased member's personal protective equipment (PPE)
 - b. Injured/deceased member's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)
 - c. Injured/deceased member's self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA)
 - d. Relevant equipment/tools/vehicles/vessels
 - e. Injured/deceased member's training records
 - f. Incident radio communications recordings
 - g. Incident photographs
 - h. Incident videos including helicopter, media, and civilian
 - i. Witness statements
2. Any item that may be considered as evidence shall be preserved and held until the Serious Accident Review Team (SART) lead investigator or health and safety officer deems otherwise.
3. For more information on investigative procedures refer to:
 - a. SDFD Serious Accident Review Team Policy
 - b. SDFD Equipment Failure Policy
 - c. [Guide for Investigation of a Line of Duty Death](#), International Association of Fire Chiefs
4. Critical incident stress debriefing will occur automatically on all injured-on-duty- deaths (IODD) and LODD incidents.
5. All lifeguard personnel will complete a narrative to be collected by the lifeguard chief or marine safety captain when involved in an IODD or LODD

D. LODD/IODD and Serious Injury Notification System

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1. Upon notification of a line-of-duty death, injured-on-duty death, or serious injury, the ECDC BC shall contact the on-duty deputy chief of operations and/or the lifeguard chief, provide them with the information given by the hospital officer or incident commander, and initiate notifications.
2. The ECDC BC will contact the following with an email and page:
 - 1) Fire Chief
 - 2) Assistant Chiefs
 - 3) Lifeguard Chief and Marine Safety Captain
 - 4) Deputy Chiefs
 - 5) Public Information Officer
 - 6) Health and Safety Office group
 - 7) President of L145 (if LODD or injured employee is Local 145 member)
 - a. Additional notifications, as needed:
 - 1) Local 145 President
 - 2) Local 911 Chief Steward
 - 3) Local 127 President
 - 4) Municipal Employee Association (MEA) President
 - 5) San Diego Fireman's Relief Association (SDFRA) President
 - 6) San Diego Lifesaving Association (SDLA) President
 - b. The email will include the following information:
 - 1) Name of hospital officer or reporting party
 - 2) Contact information of hospital officer
 - 3) Deceased/seriously injured member's name and rank
 - 4) Deceased/seriously injured members' assigned unit or work location
 - 5) Nature and circumstances of death/injury
 - 6) Location of deceased/injured member
 - 7) Any family members that are department or city employees
 - c. The page will contain the following information:
"Check city email for an IODD/LODD notification"
 - d. Upon notification, members of the notification unit and members with initial LODD and IODD responsibilities shall immediately refer to the purple initial actions envelope and follow the steps relevant to their position.
 - e. The fire chief, assistant fire chiefs, Health and Safety Office, on-duty deputy chief of operations, or the deputy chief of employee services, will be responsible for securing the *Employee Emergency Contact Information* sheet.

E. Restrictions on Information Release

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1. Strict restrictions on information regarding the death or serious injury of a public safety employee are necessary to prevent potential violations of state and/or federal patient privacy laws and improper notification of the family.
2. Only those personnel who have a direct role in the notification and emotional support of the family, or who are part of the investigation team, shall be given information from the ECDC BC or on-duty deputy chief of operations.
3. To ensure that the family of the injured or deceased does not find out by some means other than the official notification process, SDFD members WILL NOT SHARE WITH ANYONE the death or serious injury of a member until official department notification has been made and confirmed by the fire chief, lifeguard chief, or designee.
4. Do not let any press or media into the location of the deceased/injured or onto the fire ground or incident location of the deceased/injured unless approved by the fire chief or lifeguard chief. Confirm all media relations with the public information officer (PIO).
5. If necessary, a police officer and/or PIO may be assigned to the deceased member's station/tower/facility and home to protect them from overly aggressive media inquiries.
6. Only the fire chief, lifeguard chief or designee shall give or authorize information to be released to the media or family.

F. Family Notification

1. The term "family" may include any number of living relatives including husband, wife, domestic partner, mother, father, brother, sister, and children.
2. No individual shall contact or notify the family of the deceased or injured member until authorized by the fire chief, lifeguard chief, or their designated appointee.
3. The on-duty deputy chief of operations shall immediately consult with the fire chief, lifeguard chief, or designee, to determine the most appropriate course of action to notify the family of the deceased or seriously injured member. This may include the assembly of a notification unit (See Firefighter or Lifeguard Funeral/Memorial Guidebook).
4. All decisions regarding the notification of the family are at the sole discretion of the fire chief, lifeguard chief, or designee.
5. Department members making the official notification shall use any means necessary to ensure prompt notification. This may include the following options:

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- a. For deceased member's family living near the city the use of city or department vehicles is most appropriate.
 - b. For member's family living out of city to make department notification impractical, coordination with other agencies such as local fire department and/or law enforcement will be required.
6. If it is known that any member of the family may have a medical condition that may be exacerbated by this traumatic news, a paramedic should be assigned to the notification unit.
 7. Grief, crisis support, and counseling to all family and sworn personnel will be coordinated by the Health and Safety Office.
- G. On-Duty Workforce Notification
1. Members on the scene of an IODD or LODD shall not divulge any information regarding the injured or deceased employee until after the initial official department notification has been made.
 2. When ECDC receives confirmation from the notification officer and/or the on-duty deputy chief of operations that the family of the deceased has been notified, and the fire chief approves, ECDC shall make an initial department notification of a line-of-duty death/serious injury.
 - a. Firefighters: The initial department announcement of a line-of-duty/injured on duty death shall be made to all stations, all units, and all pagers.
 - b. Lifeguards: The initial announcement of a line-of-duty death/injured on duty death shall be made to all sergeants and lieutenants with instructions to notify crews in person immediately.
 - c. The official department announcement of a line-of-duty death/injured on duty death shall be made via Office of the Chief.
- H. Off-Duty Workforce Notification
1. After all official department notifications have been made to on-duty personnel, company officers and battalion chiefs shall notify the off-duty company officers and battalion chiefs at the same work site.
 2. Off-duty company officers and battalion chiefs shall notify the members under their command.
- I. Securing Member's Personal Property
1. The battalion chief/supervisor, lifeguard sergeant, or lifeguard lieutenant of the deceased member's station/tower/facility shall:
 - a. Ensure that all personal items of the deceased are secured until they can be reclaimed by family.
 - b. Obtain permission from the family and:

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- 1) Ensure that the badge and name plate of the deceased member are immediately provided for encasement and presentation to the family.
- 2) Secure the deceased member's Class A and Class B uniforms (if applicable) so they may be prepared for use during burial or to be presented to the family.
- c. Ensure that all personal and city owned property is properly accounted for and secured pending investigation.

J. Additional Notifications

1. Proper etiquette requires the immediate notification of the following dignitaries:
 - a. Mayor
 - b. Council members
 - c. Governor
2. State and federal laws require the following notifications:
 - a. Within eight hours of injury or death the fire chief, or designee shall notify:
 - 1) California Occupational Safety and Health Agency
7575 Metropolitan Drive
Suite 207
San Diego 92108
 - 2) National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health
www.cdc.gov/nosh/implweb.html
 - b. Within 24 hours of death the fire chief, or designee shall notify:
 - 1) Cal OES duty fire chief