



## MYRTLE BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

### ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS AND OPERATING PROCEDURES

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**Subject:**            *Line of Duty Injury or Death*

**Number:** *113-B*

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**Effective Date:**    *January 1, 2001*

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**Rescinds:**    *113 –Line of Duty Death*  
*113-A Line of Duty Death*

**Dated:** *January 1, 2001*  
*August 28, 2015*

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Approved By:

#### I.    PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish procedures to ensure proper support and care for an officer of the Myrtle Beach Police Department in the event of a serious injury or death in the line-of-duty as well as a death from natural causes.

#### II.   GOALS

The goal of this policy is to set guidelines to provide liaison assistance to the immediate survivors of an officer of the Myrtle Beach Police Department, who dies, or is seriously injured, in the line-of-duty.

The Chief of Police may put any part of this policy into effect should an officer of the Myrtle Beach Police Department die of natural causes. The department will provide to the officer's family a clarification and comprehensive list of survivor benefits as well as emotional support during this traumatic experience. The family will decide funeral arrangements for the deceased officer with their wishes taking precedence over that of the department.

### III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Line-of-Duty Death: The death of an officer by an unlawful act or accidental manner, e.g., automobile accident, hit by a passing vehicle during a traffic stop, training accident, etc., while performing a police-related act, whether on-duty or off-duty, and while the officer was an active member of the Myrtle Beach Police Department.
- B. Officer: Officer means employees of this department sworn to uphold the constitution and laws, i.e., police officers and police supervisors, and non-sworn officers responsible for inmates, i.e., detention officers and detention supervisors.
- C. Serious Injury: Any personal injury that results in the loss of a limb, significant disfigurement, a spinal or skull fracture, the loss of a fetus, or the permanent loss, or significant impairment, of use of a body organ, member, function or system
- D. Survivors or Family: Immediate family members to include a spouse, children, parents, siblings, a fiancée, and significant others.

### IV. DISCUSSION

One of the most vital parts of this policy is the coordination of the events should there be a serious injury or death in the line-of-duty of an officer of this department. Professionalism and compassion must be shown at all times. In reality, this becomes an obligation to the officer's survivors and to the law enforcement community. We must provide the best possible support and care for the officer's family, and to assure this is done, specific tasks may be assigned to selected officers of the Myrtle Beach Police Department. The titles of these positions are:

- A. Notification Officer
- B. Hospital Liaison Officer
- C. Family Liaison Officer
- D. Public Information Officer
- E. Department Liaison Officer
- F. Benefits Coordinator

An explanation of each of these positions is included in this policy. An officer may be called upon to act in one or more of these positions.

Each officer of the Myrtle Beach Police Department will maintain an up-to-date Confidential Line-of-Duty Death Information form to be kept in the officer's personnel file at the Myrtle Beach Police Department. It is strongly suggested that each officer make known to their family that this form is in their

individual file and that it contains the member's wishes should a line-of-duty death or serious injury occur. This form will be of great assistance to the member's family in a time when many decisions must be made under a great deal of stress. It is the hope of this department that this form will be a way to make this traumatic experience a little easier for the officer's family and also a way to assure that the officer's wishes are made known. Once again, the decision of the officer's family will take precedence over all others.

## V. PROCEDURE

### A. Notification & the Notification Officer

1. It is the responsibility of the Chief of Police, or his or her designee, to properly notify the next of kin of an officer that suffered severe injuries or death. The Chief of Police may make the notification personally or designate a Notification Officer to inform the survivors.
2. The name of a seriously injured or deceased officer will not be released by the Department under any circumstances before the immediate family is notified.
3. If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate survivor, medical personnel should be available at the time of the notification.
4. Notification should never be made alone. The Chief of Police, or the Notification Officer, should contact a Chaplain, close friend or another police survivor to accompany them to make the proper notification. If for some reason none of these persons are available, another officer of the Department will be chosen. Notification should not be delayed. This is especially important should the officer still be alive but death is anticipated at any time.
5. Should the incident have occurred while on duty, radio traffic is a major concern. Once it is known that a member is deceased, supervisors on duty will meet and discuss how notification to officers on duty will be handled. Under no circumstances will this be done by radio or electronic messaging. As we all know, the media and the general public often listen to our radio traffic, and the chance of them hearing the notification over the radio and then giving it to news media is too great. We must protect the family of the injured or deceased officer.
6. Notification should never be made on the doorstep. When making the notification, you should ask to be admitted into the residence. In making the notification, you should not try to lessen the impact of the moment. Use words that exactly describe the event. Do not use

words such as passed away or gone away. Use such words as “dead” or “died” to avoid confusion. If facts that led to the death or severe injury to the officer are known, they should be told to the family members. We must always remember we must not keep anything from the family. The family would rather hear it from us than over the radio or in the newspaper the next day.

7. Should the family request to go to the hospital, officers should offer to provide them transportation in a police vehicle.
8. If there are small children at home, provisions must be made for them to have a babysitter. Officers, officers’ spouses or other, local family members can handle this, transportation should be arranged and carried out by an officer of the department.
9. Prior to leaving for the hospital, the Notification Officer should call the hospital and advise them that the family is en-route and their expected time of arrival.
10. The parents of the deceased, or seriously injured officer, should be notified as well. This notification should also be personal in nature if at all possible. If immediate family members live out of the area of Myrtle Beach, the Notification Officer will be responsible for telephoning the appropriate jurisdiction and ask them to make a personal notification.
11. The Chief of Police, or a designee, will respond promptly to the residence or hospital to meet with the family as quickly as possible.

#### B. Assistance for Affected Officers

1. Officers of the Myrtle Beach Police Department that were on the scene when, or who arrived moments after, another officer was critically injured or killed should be relieved of duty as soon as possible.
2. Police witnesses and other officers, who were emotionally affected by the injury or death, will attend a Critical Debriefing held by a trained mental health professional.

#### C. Assisting the Family at the Hospital & the Hospital Liaison Officer

1. A Hospital Liaison Officer will be assigned by the Chief of Police, or a designee, to assist the family upon their arrival at the hospital. Once at the hospital, this officer will be responsible for arranging all events at the hospital including preparing for the arrival of the family, other police officers, the news media and others.

2. The Hospital Liaison Officer should arrange for the following:
    - a. An appropriate waiting area for the family.
    - b. A separate area for police officers to assemble.
    - c. A totally separate area for the news media.
      - 1) The Public Information Officer will advise the media that they will be informed of all developments as soon as proper notification to the family is complete.
  3. Should the incident occur while an officer is on-duty, the Hospital Liaison Officer will notify the hospital billing office so that no bills will be sent to the family, but will be covered by Workers Compensation and the insurance plan of the City of Myrtle Beach. Should the serious injury or death be an off-duty incident, the Hospital Liaison Officer will notify the hospital billing office to work through him or her so that no bills will be given to the family during the first hours of this traumatic experience.
  4. The Hospital Liaison Officer will ensure that the family is kept abreast of all updates and other pertinent information as it becomes available and before it is released to anyone else.
  5. If it is possible for the family to visit the injured officer before surgery or death, this should be arranged as quickly as possible. Before taking the family to see the injured officer, the family should be told what to expect once they get in the room. This needs to be done as tactfully as possible and should be done in a manner that the family will understand what they are about to see.
  6. It will be the responsibility of the Hospital Liaison Officer to ensure that should an autopsy be needed, the family is informed as to why this is needed. Also, the Hospital Liaison Officer should arrange for transportation of the family back to the residence.
- D. Support for the Family During the Wake and Funeral & the Family Liaison Officer
1. The Chief of Police, or a designee, will meet with the officer's family at the residence to determine the wishes of the family regarding departmental participation in the funeral or service.
  2. With the approval of the family, the Chief of Police will assign a Family Liaison Officer to the family. This person should be one that has shared a close relationship with the deceased member and is well known to the family. If at all possible, a team consisting of a male and a female should be assigned. Of all positions in this policy, this is usually considered the most important. These officers will serve as a

buffer for the family with the media, and other officers as well as handle any questions without bothering the family. Once again, the immediate family will make any funeral arrangements or other decisions such as this. The Family Liaison Officer can certainly aid the family by making them aware of the procedures as far as Police, Military or organization funerals that they may want to have for the deceased member. It will also be the responsibility of the Family Liaison Officer to keep the family informed throughout the investigation process so that all of their questions can be answered without jeopardizing the investigation.

3. It will also be the Family Liaison Officer's responsibility to contact Concerns of Police Survivors (C.O.P.S.) at (573) 346-4911. They will arrange for emotional support to be lined up for the surviving family members and for any other assistance C.O.P.S. can help with.

#### E. Departmental Liaison Officer

1. A member of the Command Staff should fill the Departmental Liaison Officer position. This person will need to coordinate resources throughout the department and will be in close contact with the Family Liaison Officer.
2. The Departmental Liaison Officer will also be available to coordinate the funeral activities and the basic itinerary when meeting with the following persons:
  - a. Chief of Police
  - b. Funeral Director
  - c. Family Priest, Minister, Rabbi, Imam, or other religious representative
  - d. Cemetery Director
  - e. Honor Guard
3. The Departmental Liaison Officer will be responsible for sending a nationwide teletype message, which will include the following:
  - a. Name of the deceased;
  - b. Date and time of death;
  - c. Circumstances surrounding the death;
  - d. Funeral arrangements (private or police);
  - e. Establish uniform of the day for wake, viewing and funeral;
  - f. Expressions of sympathy in lieu of flowers;
  - g. Contact person and number where they may be reached.

4. The Departmental Liaison Officer will also be in charge of the following:

- a. Obtaining an American Flag if the family wishes a flag presentation by the Chief of Police;
- b. If the family desires the deceased member be buried in uniform, the Departmental Liaison Officer will assure this is carried out by taking all necessary items, excluding weapons, to the funeral home;
- c. The Department Liaison Officer will also aid the family with contacting other members, etc., for pallbearers and ushers;
- d. Arrangements will be made to assure the belongings of the deceased member are returned to the family;
- e. A meeting with the Command Staff and the Chief of Police will be arranged to directly advise them of all plans for the wake, viewing, and the funeral.
- f. The surviving parents must be shown the proper recognition, and proper placement at the wake, viewing, and funeral, which will be arranged by the Department Liaison Officer. We must remember they are victims also.
- g. The Department Liaison Officer will arrange for EMS to be available for the family, or anyone else, at the wake, viewing and funeral.
- h. The Department Liaison Officer will meet with the Traffic Sergeant to make sure all arrangements are made for the funeral and procession.
- i. The Department Liaison Officer will also assign a member of the department to remain at the family home during the wake, viewing and funeral.
- j. The Department Liaison Officer will maintain a list of all outside agencies attending the funeral and the number of cars that will be in the procession, if possible.
- k. A keep-check will be placed on the family home, if in the city limits of Myrtle Beach, for a period of six to eight weeks.

F. Public Information Officer

1. The Public Information Officer position will be filled by the Public Information Officer of the Myrtle Beach Police Department.
2. Once advised of a death or serious injury, the Public Information Officer will respond to the hospital where he or she will meet with the Hospital Liaison Officer. After being briefed, the Public Information Officer will meet with the media to bring them up-to-date as much as possible in reference to the incident. The Public Information Officer will not release any information unless directed to by the Chief of Police, or a designee.

3. The major function of the Public Information Officer will be handling the news media for the department and the family. Should the family decide to do an interview with the media, the Public Information Officer will screen questions from the media that may have an impact on any ongoing investigation.

#### G. Benefits Coordinator

1. The Benefits Coordinator position will be filled with a representative from the Human Resources Division of the City of Myrtle Beach.
2. The Benefits Coordinator will be assisted by the Family Liaison Officer to assure the family of the deceased member will receive all benefits that are due to the family.

#### H. Confidential Line of Duty Death Information Form

1. Pre-Service: The Line of Duty Injury or Death policy will be reviewed with new recruits as part of the Pre-Service Program, or as part of the FTO Program should a new recruit skip the Pre-Service Program as he or she is already a certified officer. All new officers will be required to complete the Line of Duty Injury or Death Information form.
2. Confidential: All officers are required to complete a Line of Duty Injury or Death Information form. Forms should be typed so there are no questions about an officer's intent due to legibility issues. Officers will seal their forms in an envelope and mark the envelope with "Line of Duty Injury or Death Information," their name and their employee number. These forms are confidential and will be kept sealed in the officer's personnel file in the Administrative Section of the Myrtle Beach Police Department. If an officer updates his or her form, their old form will be given back to them for disposal. Should an officer be seriously injured or killed in the line of duty, the immediate family will be notified of the form, and it will be delivered to them by the Family Liaison Officer. If an officer leaves employment with the City of Myrtle Beach, the envelope containing the form will be returned to the officer when he or she signs their departure forms.
3. Updates: Officers are encouraged to update their Line of Duty Injury or Death Information form whenever circumstances change. Additionally, the Department will remind officers to update their Line of Duty Injury or Death Information forms, as necessary, annually each spring.