

DEVELOPMENT OF A LINE-OF-DUTY DEATH NOTIFICATION STANDARD
OPERATING GUIDELINE FOR THE ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT

Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management

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Abstract

Firefighters risk their lives to protect the communities they serve everyday across the United States. Line-of-duty deaths (LODD) occur about 100 times each year. The City of Rochester, New York Fire Department (RFD) understands that this unwanted occurrence can happen at anytime. With the media, quickly getting the live news out, prompt notification of a firefighter's family is a challenge for any department. The problem is that the Rochester Fire Department does not have a written Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) for Notification of a LODD. The purpose of this research paper is to create a written SOG that may be implemented should a LODD occur. This ARP utilized the descriptive and action research methods to answer the following questions:

1. What are the benefits of having a LODD Notification guideline?
2. What do RFD firefighters feel are areas of concern during a LODD notification?
3. What are the essential components needed for a Notification of a LODD standard operating guideline?

The procedures consisted of three distinct facets. First, a through literature review was conducted using conventional library and Internet based research. The second was a written survey sent out allowing 30 days for a returned response. The third was a personal interview.

The results revealed that the RFD needed a SOG's to guide them through the traumatic time that a LODD would create for both the family and the department. It was

clear that the diverse department would require a form that would allow the sundry of individual needs to be met.

The recommendations, based upon this research, were for the RFD to adopt the two SOG's produced as part of this applied research paper. Then to make them available to any department interested in creating their own.

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Introduction

Firefighters risk their lives to protect the communities they serve everyday across the United States. “It isn’t a question of whether a firefighter may be killed in the line-of-duty, the question is how many and when” (DeChant, 2001, p. 46). The City of Rochester, New York Fire Department (RFD) understands that this unwanted occurrence can happen at anytime and have established funeral guidelines for handling the situation. With the technical advances in the media, to quickly get the live news events out to the public faster than ever before, prompt notification of a firefighter’s family is a challenge for any department. “The potential to neglect a family’s needs would be the greatest injustice that a fire department could perpetrate” (DeChant, 2001, p. 46). The problem is that the Rochester Fire Department does not currently have a written Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) for Notification of a Line-of-Duty Death (LODD). The purpose of this applied research paper (ARP) is to create a written SOG that may be implemented should a LODD occur. Following the guidelines set forth in the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) publication “Operational Policies and Procedures, Applied Research Guidelines,” revised June 1, 2002, the descriptive and action research methods will be used to answer the following questions:

4. What are the benefits of having a LODD Notification guideline?
5. What do RFD firefighters feel are areas of concern during a LODD notification?
6. What are the essential components needed for a Notification of a LODD standard operating guideline?

Background and Significance

The City of Rochester, New York (CRNY) is the third largest city in New York State, covering 35.8 square miles with a population of 219,773 (United States Census Bureau [USCB], 2000). The RFD has 521 uniformed employees. There are 18 companies housed in 16 stations, with approximately 97 personnel on duty at all times. The RFD responds to over 28,000 requests for service annually, of which just over 800 are for structure fires. The CRNY has been protected from fire since the early 1800's. Fifty-two members of the RFD gave their lives in the performance of their duty over the past 200 years, the three most recent within the last 25 years and the last occurring in 1987 (RFD Fallen Firefighter's Memorial, 1997).

Since the last LODD in the RFD 18 years ago, technology has advanced immensely, both in the fire service and in media broadcasting. The Rochester area now has five major television news outlets, all with live coverage capability. What used to be seen many hours after an incident occurred during a scheduled newscast is now broadcasted as it occurs, live. This live delivery of news places an added stress on the incident commander, and fire department administration to move as quickly as possible to notify the family of the deceased firefighter before they hear about it from a media source. It would be a travesty if in the future the family of a fallen firefighter were to learn of the terrible news of the death of a loved one in such a non-personal uncaring way as would be delivered by a news broadcast.

After a co-worker, and close friend, had experienced a serious injury in the line-of-duty, the author was called at home and asked to go inform his wife that he was on his way to the hospital and someone would be there soon to pick her up and take her to see

him. Given nothing more than there were burns and trauma injuries the author had nothing else to tell his friend's wife. That was nearly ten years ago. Today as a command officer in the RFD, I never want to be put, or place anyone, in that situation again.

This ARP relates to the terminal objective in Unit 1 of the Executive Analysis of Fire Service Operations in Emergency Management course, "to analyze their own department's level of preparedness" (National Fire Academy [NFA], 2004, SM 1-1). This project will allow the RFD to professionally and effectively notify our fallen comrades next of kin.

This research project relates to the United States Fire Administration operational objective, "to respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (NFA, 2003, p. II-2) by responding to a critical issue that was brought about by the flourishing technology in another field that could have a devastating effect on the family of one of our own.

Literature Review

Preplanning for the recurrent operations encountered daily across the United States, by the fire service, is something that has gone on forever. Preplanning for the less frequent large-scale incidents is something we are getting better at now that the term "Terrorism" has touched our home soil. On average, 100 firefighters are killed in the line-of-duty every year (National Fallen Firefighter Foundation [NFFF], 2001). Yet no matter how much the researcher read through the literature collected for this project, one thing rings clear, "when our members and their families need us the most, some of us leave it to chance" (Holt, 2000, p. 30). Less than 25% of emergency response agencies are prepared for this type of catastrophic event.

The benefit to preplanning is that many eyes have had the opportunity to look over and review a guideline and address any unforeseen glitches. Warren L. James said, “there is never a good time for a fire service funeral, but there are ways to make the process go more smoothly, if not less painfully” (1998, p. 51). From his list of nine lessons learned from a recent LODD in his department, James listed as number one: “Review your fallen firefighter policy and protocol. If you don’t have one in place or if the one you have isn’t adequate, don’t wait until you need it to write one” (1998, p. 52). Donnie P. West Jr. elaborated more and said, “if for some reason your department does not have a LODD Response Plan, develop and implement one. Without a current LODD Response Plan, a fire department will find itself inadequate for the family and department’s needs” (2001, p.9).

The unexpected death of a family member will be a life-changing event for anyone. Fire departments must realize that the initial contact with the family, notifying them of the death of a loved one, can have a very devastating effect. Sensitivity and the manner used to deliver this notification must be planned and not left to chance. This notification will remain with the survivor forever (Eller, 1999). During an interview with Lieutenant Shaun Murray he said, “I remember the notification as if it were yesterday: who was there, when they got there, and what they said” (S. Murray, personal communication, August 19, 2005).

Patrick E. Able identifies this in his 2003 applied research paper when he addresses procedures to be considered during a LODD:

Dealing with this type of tragedy can be disastrous for survivors if the situation is not treated with respect and dignity. Fire departments are often caught off-guard

by the death of one of their own and may not be prepared to deal with this emotional situation of an (sic) LODD (Able, 2003, p.12).

Being prepared for a firefighter death will allow a smooth and successful handling of all the needed details.

The firefighter's emergency contact information is the most important item needed at the time of a LODD. Once positive identification has been made, personal information should be reviewed. It will tell the department who needs to be notified in case of emergency. "Accumulation of firefighter personal information is vital. This information will help the surviving family and department to be aware of the individual's desires" (McQuarter, 2002, p. 18). The NFFF has a sample employee emergency contact information form that can be used as is or tailored specifically for the department. The components of the NFFF contact form (NFFF, 2005) are:

Personal Information

Complete birth name

Address

Telephone numbers: home, cell, pager

Contact(s) Information

Name

Relationship

Address

Telephone numbers: home, cell, pager

Name of children

Dates of birth

Department member(s) to accompany notification team

Additional people for notification team

Optional Information

Religious preferences

Funeral preferences

Will information

Life insurance information

Special requests

This form provides a foundation of information that the notification team will find vital during a very stressful period.

Notification of next of kin is another component of the notification procedure. Families have told the NFFF that the way they received notification of a LODD set the stage for difficult time ahead (NFFF, 2001). State of the art media broadcasting will challenge a department's ability to get to the next of kin before they see or hear it from the media. Although the name may not be released, anxiety will strike all families that have members working that shift. Location of the incident will lessen the stress to some families and heighten it for others. "Prompt, judicious notification of the next of kin is of the utmost importance in the case of a LODD" (Peige, 1984, p. 47). Family, friends, or the media may be listening to scanners. Do not discuss the incident over the radio (Maciuba, 2001).

An official representative of the fire department should do the notification. It should be in person when ever possible. This official notification serves to assure the

family of the validity of the information. It is imperative that this notification occurs prior to any information being released to the media (Peige, 1984).

The NFFF lists the five principles of notification as (NFFF, 2001, pp. 29-30):

In Person

- Always do the notification in person, never by phone!
- For family members living out of the local area, arrange for authorities in that area to make the notification in person.
- Immediately find the firefighter's emergency contact information to know who needs to be notified in person. Usually, the spouse (or unmarried partner) and parents of the firefighter should be the first priority.

In Time and with Certainty

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

In Pairs

- Have two people present to make notification. Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions when they learn of the death.
- 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.

- 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.
- Before you arrive, decide who will speak and what that person will say.

In Plain Language

- Clearly identify yourself and present identification, then ask to come in.
- Notification should take place in a private setting.
- If you don't know the family member, make sure you are talking to the right person.
- Begin with "I have very bad news," or "I'm so sorry to have to tell you this."
- 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.
- Calmly answer the survivor's questions. It is fine to say, "I don't know" if you don't.
- Use his or her name when referring to the firefighter, rather than saying "the body."

With Compassion

- Allow survivors to express emotions. Do not try to talk them out of their grief.

- Accept your own emotions. It's okay if you cry during notification, but stay calm.
- Never leave immediately after making a notification. Offer to help the survivor call friends or family. Do not leave before someone else arrives.
- Do not take the firefighter's personal items with you when you make the notification. Tell the family they will receive them later. Most survivors will need some time before they feel able to deal with these items.
- 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.
- Before leaving, write down important information, including names and phone numbers of the department personnel who will work with the family.
- Have one member of the department stay with the family, unless the family declines.

“It shall be the responsibility of the Chief of the Department to properly notify the next of kin of the firefighter who has suffered severe injuries or has died” (Cave, 2001, p. 11). He may personally do it or designate the task to another officer. It is most reassuring to the family when the Chief or another high-ranking officer responds to the home to make the LODD notify. Family and co-workers may view their absence as not only insensitive but also poor leadership as well (Sawyer, 1999).

In summary, to properly handle a LODD notification all one should have to do is ask, “how would I want my family to be told I had died on the job” (Sawyer, 1999, p.

11)? By having each firefighter fill-out an emergency contact form, and checking it regularly, ensures that the notification is done, as the deceased member wants. To make certain that the notification process addresses all areas of concern, the use of the Incident Command System, in conjunction with department SOP's must be used to prevent any oversight of a critical task (Peige, 1984). The proper or improper way the notification process is handled by the department will be long remembered by the family. The resources used for this research along with desires of the RFD membership should provide the necessary foundation for development of a usable notification document for the RFD.

Procedures

Research for this project was conducted at a number of different locations. The procedures used to answer the first and third questions in this action research project began with a literature review. While at the NFA in Emmitsburg, Maryland, the Online Card Catalog at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) was used to search on the topic of LODD. To assemble a diverse collection of literature, on the "Search by LRC Subjects" window the following phrases were entered individually on the "Subjects" search line: *line of duty death, standard operating procedures, families, and firefighter fatalities*. Under the "Limit Results by" line, each search was also restricted by 1999 in the "Date from" box and *any* in the "Document Type" box. This provided the researcher with a divergent collection of EFOP papers and articles that were current and valuable to this project. A search of the LRC's database was done again from my home computer, through the NFA website, utilizing the same "Limit Results by" criteria for the following additional phrases: *firefighter memorials, and public safety officers benefits act*. Abstracts

and EFOP papers were downloaded from the website for review. The Internet was another location used to search for information on the research topic. On the Google.com page, the phrase, *line of duty death*, was searched. When the results were listed the “search within the results” was selected and the phrase, *firefighter*, was entered. This reduced the results, but not enough to allow reviewing all sites. Only the first two pages of results were used. The www.firehero.com website, provided very useful information utilizing many of their links to other sites or additional resources within their site.

A copy of the October 9, 1997 Fallen Firefighters’ Memorial Dedication Program was retrieved from Margaret Popolizio in the RFD Planning and Research Division.

A survey of the members of the RFD was utilized. The cover letter and survey form may be found in Appendixes A and B respectively. RFD Executive Deputy Chief Ralph V. Privitere reviewed the survey form for suggestions (R. Privitere, personal communication, August 5, 2005). The survey was used to gather data to answer the second question in this ARP: What do RFD firefighters feel are areas of concern during a LODD notification? The survey was sent to 494 RFD members that were working during the 30 day survey period of August 8, 2005 through September 10, 2005. The members unable to receive interdepartmental mail at their station or staff assignment due to sickness, injury, or military leave were not counted as part of the survey sample. This sample represented 94.8% (494 of the 521 uniformed members) of the department’s membership.

After the surveys were sent out to the members, an additional resource for this ARP was brought to the author’s attention: RFD Lieutenant Shaun Murray. Lieutenant Murray’s father-in-law was Firefighter C. Russo, the last LODD experienced by the RFD

on March 10, 1987. When I asked Lieutenant Murray if he would be comfortable talking about his families experience he was very eager to assist. So he met with me for a 45-minute interview on August 19, 2005, in my office.

Limitations and Assumptions

There were a number of limitations that were recognized during the research project. After examining all the research materials procured from the Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy and those documents offered by the National Fallen Firefighter Foundation, it was clear that there was very little documentation pertaining to the family notification process as related to a LODD. The actions that would occur after the family's notification, investigation, funeral arrangements and benefits comprised the bulk of the procedural information available. Another limitation was the fact that there was not one current RFD chief officer that was involved with the last LODD notification available to ask what they used to guide them through the process. All those involved in the 1987 Russo notification were retired and unavailable or deceased. The limitation identified next may be the one that had the most impact on this ARP. The RFD process to adopt and implement any new policy or procedure takes a significant amount of time and effort. The limited amount of time to complete an ARP is just enough to complete the research needed and write the paper. The information gathered would be used to develop a draft procedure that will be submitted for approval.

It is assumed that the respondents for the survey understood the questions being asked of them and the terminology. It is also assumed that the respondents answered the survey carefully, truthfully, and to the best of their ability. All recipients were given 30 days to return their survey.

Definitions

Line-of-Duty Death - the death of a firefighter as a result of performing an officially sanctioned duty or task.

Serious/Life-threatening Injury - an injury that has an expected outcome of death.

Union Representative - an elected official of the firefighters' Union Local 1071.

Company Representative - a member of the firefighter's company that the spouse will recognize.

Results

In reference to question one, the research showed that having documentation ready pre-catastrophe would benefit both the fire department and the deceased firefighter's family. Having a department document that spells out what needs to be done reduces the chances significantly that a critical item will be missed, causing greater heartache for the surviving family and embarrassment to the fire department. It also standardizes the guideline so that each LODD notification covers the same basics and no family ever gets or feels slighted. The department guideline also will speed up the process of that notification by expunging the likelihood that valuable time will be wasted researching what needs to be done during the crisis. Making it possible that the family may hear the tragic news from someone other than the appropriate fire department official.

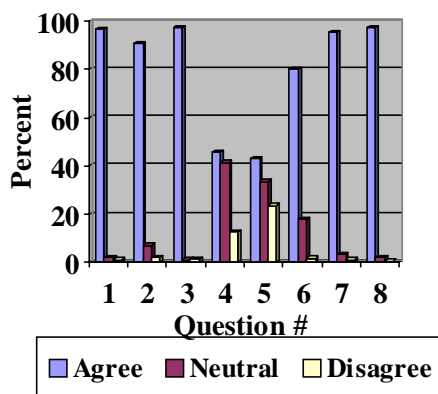
The research for question three showed that the essential components needed for a LODD Notification guideline were personal. Each firefighter has his/her own emergency contact. Whether the contact is a spouse, child, parent, or close friend, each knows how, and the best way, their way, they want their contact to be notified. There are many

templates available from a variety of different sources to use for the gathering of each firefighters personal information and desires. This fact makes it easy to mix and match ideas from many sources to compile a unique document that meets the wants and needs of each individual department. In addition to the personal component of the guideline, there must be an outline or check list for the fire department official to follow so they feel as comfortable as possible about what they should and should not do. These principles should be known to all command officers that may have to undertake the dreaded task of making a LODD Notification. These essential components can be on a small index card so the fire department official can review them before arriving at the home of the next-of-kin.

The survey results (Appendix C) showed the RFD's overwhelming agreement (figure 1), 96.5%, for the personal and emergency notification information to be gathered in advance.

Figure 1

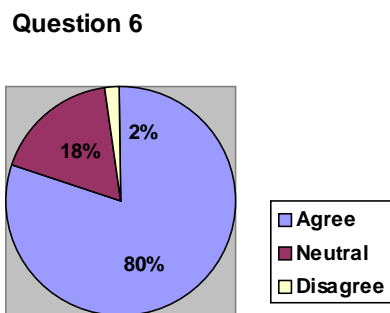
Rochester Firefighter Survey Results



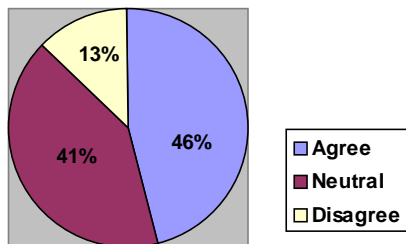
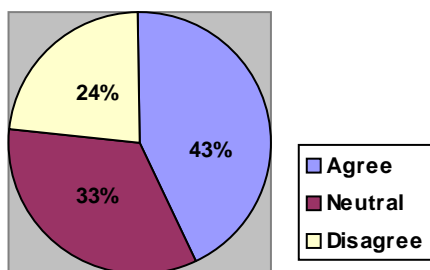
The question on reviewing and updating the personal and emergency notification information was also significantly supported by more than 90% of the respondents. The prompt notification of spouse, children/ or parents received a nearly unanimous, 97.3%, support. With the first three questions all receiving such high support message from the RFD membership was clear. Prompt notification of a LODD is important to them, and they understand their personal and emergency notification information must be kept current.

The diverse results of survey questions 4-6 shows the fact that not everyone values the need for religious, union, or company participation in the notification process the same. The desire to have a company member assist received the greatest support with 79.9% agreeing (Figure 2).

Figure 2



The religious (Figure 3) and union (Figure 4) representation received 45.7% and 42.7% respectively. Having the choice to select, and identify the person in each of these categories makes the notification as personal and individual as possible.

Figure 3**Question 4**Figure 4**Question 5**

The immense support for question 7 shows that family security and privacy are important factors to consider. Although the department and public served may think that a large community ceremony is appropriate the deceased and their family may not want it. Infringement into our family during a very emotional time is something that should be decided by the member and their family.

The need to have a refined procedure for those situations where death may not have occurred yet, but, is likely to be the outcome, is clearly evident with 97.3% agreeing with question 8. Although it is never really known what the outcome of any severe injury will be, having a procedure in place to notify a members family as soon as possible and in

the most appropriate way is desired. An anonymous comment sent in on a survey form was, “anytime I can’t call myself and tell my wife what happened it should be done by a Chief Officer” (RFD Survey, 2005).

Having all the firefighter’s personal information along with their individual instructions on how to make this very delicate contact will lessen the chance that the traumatic encounter, that must occur, will not go well. Possessing and regularly reviewing and updating the personal information will provide the fire department with the who, what, where, and how needed to make the notification, with out having to ask co-workers who most likely will be stressed themselves. Having this information quickly available will assist the Fire Chief, or his designee, in making prompt notification to the family of a LODD member or one with a serious/life-threatening injury.

In accordance with RFD SOG XX-05 (Appendix D), the RFD Emergency Notification Form (Appendix E) will be filled out by every member of the RFD. It will be reviewed annually and updated as needed. It will be placed in a sealed envelope, marked Open Only in Emergency, and be kept in the Line Deputy Chief’s office. Along with the envelopes there will be a folder with a copy of the NFFF’s Five Principles of Notification (Appendix F), for the Fire Chief or his designee to review before making a notification.

Discussion

The notification of the family of a LODD will be very traumatic on them. “Family members have told the NFFF that the way they were notified of the LODD set the stage for the days, weeks, and months to come” (NFFF, 2001, p.29). The preplanning that the fire service does on a regular basis can be applied to this undesirable task, making it less stressful on both the family and the Chief. “A written procedure or plan will help guide

them through this time in a competent and professional manner” (Maciuba, 2001, p.21). Being ready for the unexpected is what the fire service is all about. Being ready to assist the family of one of our own that has suffered a serious injury or LODD should be no different. “By being prepared, departments can better support families” (NFFF, 2005, p. iii). We must honor the memory of our fallen and do everything to comfort and support their families (Bruno, 2000).

Because his mother-in-law had spent the night of March 9, 1987 at his home, when the LODD notification came for Firefighter Russo, Lieutenant Murray was able to provide me with a firsthand experience of a LODD notification. He emphasized what was important to the survivors, especially the fact that they heard it from the Fire Chief, in person, first. He speculated on how the family might have felt had the notification come from another source (S. Murray, personnel communication, August 19, 2005).

Having current emergency notification information on each department member will ensure that the right person is notified in a timely manner. “Experience has shown repeatedly that when a LODD or serious injury occurs up-to-date employee information is critical” (NFFF, 2001, p.9). As the RFD survey showed not everyone wants the union, or the religious representative present when the LODD notification is made. The choice is personal, and by having the option to select, or not, any category must be on the emergency notification form. The people selected by the member to assist the Chief, or his designee, will be contacted and assembled as quickly as possible. Because time will be of the essence, if anyone will be delayed the Fire Chief will decide when the notify must be done. Handling the needs of the grief-stricken family has to be the most

important task. Neglecting the family's needs would be the greatest injustice a fire department could commit (DeChant, 2001).

A LODD notification procedure must contain some essential components in order to be beneficial to the family and the fire department. First it must contain personal emergency contact information (Appendix E). This will enable the RFD to quickly identify who needs to be notified, and where to find them. It will also allow the member to make choices on who they would like to assist in the notification. Another vital component that covers the fundamentals of the notification is the Five Principles of Notification (Appendix F). This should be a removable document that the Fire Chief or his designee can take and review prior to the notification (NFFF, 2005). The essential component that is needed to pull all this together is a written guideline that is endorsed and enforced by the RFD. This should be a guideline that just suggests a method to follow, rather than a procedure that must be followed with no variance. Every notification will be different. It is a complicated time for any fire department, regardless of size, to effectively deal with a LODD. A written guideline will help them through this time in a competent and professional manner (Maciuba, 2001). Ensuring that all members fill out the emergency notification form and review it at least annually is only guaranteed when a procedure says it must be done.

“Firefighting is an inherently dangerous occupation with the statistical support to prove that a fatality is possible” (Mefford, 2003, p. 15). The loss of a firefighter has to be every Chiefs worst fear and having to handle the notification of a LODD, the most burdensome task of a career. After personally experiencing the stress on both the messenger and the receiver of a severe injury notification 10 years ago, anything that

could help make the process less traumatic would be welcome. Having a written guideline to follow and the five principles of notification as a guide, a professional, compassionate, and honorable notification can be made. Having the firefighter fill out the notification form will provide the member the peace of mind that this very difficult task will be carried out according to their wishes.

Recommendations

Based on this study the RFD should review the LODD notification guideline and emergency notification form developed as part of this APR, and implement as soon as possible. The five principles of notification should be typed out and laminated for use by the Fire Chief, or his designee. The LODD notification procedure should be familiar to all members of the RFD and reviewed annually when they review and up-date their emergency notification form. The forms should be secured and kept in the Line Deputy Chief's office where they can be quickly accessed should a tragedy occur.

The LODD notification guideline and all related forms should be made available to any department wanting them as a reference to revising or creating the own LODD notification guideline.

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Appendix A

City of Rochester

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

To: All Members of Rochester Fire Department
From: Deputy Chief Salvatore Mitrano III
Date: August 8, 2005
Subject: Research Survey

As part of my Applied Research Project for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program, I am researching the information needed to create a "Notification" Standard Operating Guideline to be followed should a Line-of-Duty Death occur within the Rochester Fire Department. In order to make it as personal and timely as possible, during a very emotional and chaotic period, I am surveying you to ensure the Department does everything it can to notify your family in a manor you would want. Please take a few minutes to fill out the survey, and return them to me, thru inter-departmental mail, no later than September 10th. I will use the information gathered to put together the S.O.G. I will send the results of the survey out to each firehouse.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Appendix B

**Rochester Fire Department Firefighter Survey
Firefighter Line-of-Duty Death Notification**

Please indicate your extent of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “x” under the appropriate response. Your opinions to the statements below will indicate their importance, as they relate to our fire department. They are a critical component to the development of a line-of-duty death notification procedure for the Rochester Fire Department.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Personal and emergency notification information should be obtained from <u>all</u> department members in advance.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. Information in #1 should be reviewed and updated annually.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. Prompt notification of spouse, children/or parents is an important component.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. It is important to have a Department Religious representative involved in the notification.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. It is important to have a Union representative involved in the notification.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. It is important to have a Company representative involved the notification.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. Family security and privacy are important components.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. A refined notification should be included for a serious/life-threatening line-of-duty injury.	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please add any components you feel should also be addressed and/or any general comments you might have regarding emergency family notification.

Appendix C

**Rochester Fire Department Firefighter Survey
Firefighter Line-of-Duty Death Notification**

Please indicate your extent of agreement or disagreement with each of the following statements by placing an “x” under the appropriate response. Your opinions to the statements below will indicate their importance, as they relate to our fire department. They are a critical component to the development of a line-of-duty death notification procedure for the Rochester Fire Department.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Personal and emergency notification information should be obtained from <u>all</u> department members in advance.	255	105	8	1	4
2. Information in #1 should be reviewed and updated annually.	223	115	27	4	4
3. Prompt notification of spouse, children/or parents is an important component.	292	67	4	4	2
4. It is important to have a Department Religious representative involved in the notification.	77	93	154	24	24
5. It is important to have a Union representative involved in the notification.	49	110	124	53	35
6. It is important to have a Company representative involved the notification.	131	164	67	4	3
7. Family security and privacy are important components.	268	85	13	2	3
8. A refined notification should be included for a serious/life-threatening line-of-duty injury.	220	142	8	0	2

Please add any components you feel should also be addressed and/or any general comments you might have regarding emergency family notification.

Appendix D

Standard Operating Guidelines for the Rochester New York Fire Department

Title: Emergency Notification Form (RFD form XX) **Section X.XX**
1 Page

Reference: National Fallen Firefighters Foundation **Dated: XX/05**
Taking Care of Our Own: Resource Guide

Purpose: The fire departments response to a firefighter's death or serious injury will greatly affect how surviving family members, coworkers, and the community cope with the unexpected tragedy. Part of pre-planning for such a tragedy is collecting personal information from all members. In the event that a LODD occurs, this information is vital for quick and compassionate response to the family, friends, and co-workers. The following RFD XXX form will help the department be prepared with current data on each employee.

Scope: Beginning January next year (2006), each member of the RFD will be required to complete RFD Form XX. Every January thereafter until the member retires they will be reminded to up-date their RFD Form XX if needed. At anytime throughout the year the member can up-date their information. Recruits will be given the form to complete on the first day of training.

Definitions:

Line-of-duty death – (LODD) The death of any member of the Rochester Fire Department while on duty, or while undergoing medical treatment for any injury or disease resulting from such duty, is considered a line-of-duty death.

Serious/life-threatening injury – any injury sustained in the line-of-duty which is, or may become life-threatening or will disable the member for a substantial period.

Procedure:

- A. Each member will complete two (2) copies of the RFD Form XX. One for Department Records and one for the member to keep for review.
- B. The RFD copy will be returned, **sealed by the member**, in the provided envelope. The outside of the envelope will have the following information:
 - a. CONFIDENTIAL - OPEN IN EMERGENCY ONLY
 - b. Member Name
 - c. Last date revised
- C. The envelopes will be returned to the Line Deputy Chiefs office where they will be maintained.
- D. Every January the Line Deputy Chiefs will notify all members to review their RFD Form XX, and revise and resubmit if necessary.

Appendix E
**ROCHESTER FIRE DEPARTMENT
 EMPLOYEE EMERGENCY NOTIFICATION FORM**

The information that you provide will be used **ONLY** in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill out fully and accurately because the data will help the department take care of your family and friends.

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Home Address		
City	State	Zip
Phone Number		

CONTACT INFORMATION

Family or friends you would like the department to contact. Please list in the order you want them contacted. If needed, provide additional names on the back of this sheet.

NOTE: If the contact is a minor child, please indicate the name of the adult to contact.

Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address:
Phone:
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer:
Address:
Phone:
Pager/Cell phone:
Special Circumstances-such as health conditions or need for an interpreter

Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address:
Phone:
Work Contact Information
Name of Employer:
Address:
Phone:
Pager/Cell phone:
Special Circumstances-such as health conditions or need for an interpreter

List names and dates of birth of all of your children.	
Name:	DOB:
Name:	DOB:
Name:	DOB:

List the department member(s) you would like to accompany a chief fire officer to make the notification.
Name:
Name:

List anyone else you want to help make the notification. (for example, your minister)		
Name:		
Relationship:		
Home Contact Information		
Address:		
Phone:		
Work Contact Information		
Name of Employer:		
Address:		
Phone:		
Pager/Cell Phone:		

OPTIONAL INFORMATION

Make sure someone close to you knows this information.

Religious Preferences		
Religion:		
Place of Worship:		
Address:		
Funeral Preferences		
Are you a veteran of the U. S. Armed forces?	Yes	No
If you are entitled to a military funeral, do wish to have one?	Yes	No
Do you wish to have a fire service funeral?	Yes	No
Please list your membership in fire service, religious or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family:		
Do you have a will?		
If yes, where is it located or who should be contacted about it?	Yes	No
List all Life Insurance Policies you have:		
<u>Company</u>	<u>Policy Number</u>	<u>Location of Policy</u>
Is all information current: (beneficiary names, contact info, etc. This information may determine who gets Federal benefits.)		
Special Requests		
If you are an organ donor, coordination with the medical officials will be necessary. List any requests in this section.		

Form last updated on:

Reprinted from the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's *Taking Care of Our Own*® materials.

Appendix F

5 Principles of Notification

In Person

- Always do the notification in person, never by phone!
- For family members living out of the local area, arrange for authorities in that area to make the notification in person.
- Immediately find the firefighter's emergency contact information to know who needs to be notified in person. Usually, the spouse (or unmarried partner) and parents of the firefighter should be the first priority.

In Time and with Certainty

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

In Pairs

- Have two people present to make notification. Survivors may experience severe emotional or physical reactions when they learn of the death.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Before you arrive, decide who will speak and what that person will say.
-

In Plain Language

- Clearly identify yourself and present identification, then ask to come in.
- Notification should take place in a private setting.
- If you don't know the family member, make sure you are talking to the right person.
- Begin with "I have very bad news," or "I'm so sorry to have to tell you this."
- 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.
- Calmly answer the survivor's questions. It is fine to say, "I don't know" if you don't.
- Use his or her name when referring to the firefighter, rather than saying "the body."

With Compassion

- Allow survivors to express emotions. Do not try to talk them out of their grief.
- Accept your own emotions. It's okay if you cry during notification, but stay calm.
- Never leave immediately after making a notification. Offer to help the survivor call friends or family. Do not leave before someone else arrives.
- Do not take the firefighter's personal items with you when you make the notification. Tell the family they will receive them later. Most survivors will need some time before they feel able to deal with these items.
- 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.
- Before leaving, write down important information, including names and phone numbers of the department personnel who will work with the family.
- Have one member of the department stay with the family, unless the family declines.

Appendix G

Standard Operating Guidelines for the Rochester New York Fire Department

Title: On-Duty Death and Injury Notification and Communication Guideline **Section X.XX**
1 Page of 2

Reference: National Fallen Firefighters Foundation **Dated: XX/05**
Taking Care of Our Own: Resource Guide

Purpose: The fire departments response to a firefighter's death or serious injury will greatly affect how surviving family members, coworkers, and the community cope with the unexpected tragedy. Part of pre-planning for such a tragedy is to have a guideline describing the notification and communication process in place.

Scope: Establishment of a priority for notification, steps for notification and control of all communications related to the LODD.

Definitions:

Line-of-duty death – (LODD) The death of any member of the Rochester Fire Department while on duty, or while undergoing medical treatment for any injury or disease resulting from such duty, is considered a line-of-duty death.

Serious/life-threatening injury – any injury sustained in the line-of-duty which is, or may become life-threatening or will disable the member for a substantial period.

Procedure:**Initial Responsibilities**

- A. Immediately upon becoming aware that a firefighter has been seriously injured or killed the ranking officer at the scene will notify their supervisor. The Line Deputy Chief will notify Fire Chief and Executive Deputy Chief via phone.
- B. **AT NO TIME WILL THE DECEASED OR INJURED MEMBERS NAME BE GIVEN OVER THE AIR BY RADIO COMMUNICATION.**
- C. The firefighter at the scene shall not make any calls to anyone concerning the LODD. We want to make sure that the family is notified of the injury or death by the fire department and that correct information is given to them.
 - a. A call home to tell family your OK is permitted.
 - b. They should be instructed NOT to contact anyone else until notification has taken place.
 - c. Do not release name to spouse.
- D. Fire Chief and Executive Deputy Chief will respond to Line Deputy Chief's office, where they can open the Emergency Notification Envelope will member's personal notification information.
- E. In the event of a serious/life-threatening injury an available on-duty battalion Chief will respond to Line Deputy Chief's office and arrange for transportation of the family to the hospital. Two (2) people will be sent if children involved.

The Fire Chief or Executive Deputy Chief will contact the persons requested by the deceased member, on their RFD form XX, to assist in notifying his/her family.

- a. All notification team members shall meet prior to arriving at the members home.
- b. The Fire Chief or his designee will decide whether they can wait for all to assemble. Time is critical.
- c. Review this SOG completely
- d. Review and 5 Principles of Notification
- B. Upon arriving at the members home
 - a. Bring together all adult family members
 - b. Give all important information as soon as possible and in 1 or 2 sentences.
 - c. Allow family to grieve.
- C. Offer to notify any other family or friends if they would care to have department do this.
- D. Let the family know that the fire department or religious representative will stay with them as long as needed. **DO NOT LEAVE THE FAMILY MEMBERS ALONE.**
 - a. Make arrangements to take them to scene or hospital if they desire.
 - b. Tell family department will provide driver and vehicle for any needs.

Notifying Others of Death or Injury

- A. After the Family has been notified the Line Deputy Chief will notify all stations via MDT of members name and any details available.
- B. Flags will then be placed at half-staff.
- C. Media notification will only occur after Fire Chief confirms that Family notification is complete.
 - a. The following will be released:
 - i. Members Name
 - ii. Rank
 - iii. Company and Shift
 - iv. Date of Birth Date of Appointment (Rank if appropriate)
 - v. Brief summary
 1. Death or Injury is under investigation
 2. Fire or incident is under investigation
 - b. At no time will address or phone numbers be released.