

# Washington State Fire Service Line of Duty Death Guidelines and Procedures



- **Level II: Non-Line-of-Duty Death**

Death occurs when an active member is off duty and the death is not related to any emergency activities, or is a duty-related medical death that is not considered presumptive under RCW 51.32.185

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## Implementation of Procedures

The overriding philosophy of the fire service is that the first priority following a serious injury or death – after caring for the members – is the swift and compassionate notification of the injured or deceased member’s family and the extension of assistance and support to them.

As soon as is possible, the Chief should appoint an Incident Commander (IC), and a meeting should be held to assign or affirm the assignments within the Incident Command System (ICS) structure. The Appendices provide detailed roles and responsibilities for further reference. If there is a question as to whether or not the death is to be considered an LODD, please refer to the LODD Quick Determination Sheet in this document.

A briefing/planning meeting should be scheduled at least once a day until the conclusion of the Memorial Service and should include all section chiefs and other appropriate personnel. A final meeting for discussion of lessons learned and debriefing should be held no later than 48 hours after the conclusion of the Memorial Service.

The IC is responsible for the overall management of the activities that take place after the death of a member. This function is completely separate from the activity and command structure involved in the actual incident that caused the death.

The family will be presented the options available based on the classification of service, and their desires override all others. If the family wishes the help of the Agency, the sections of this document will lead the Agency and the family through the steps to properly honor the fallen member’s life. If the family does not want the assistance of the Agency, the Agency will then do whatever they can to support the family and take care of the needs of the personnel affected by the loss.

The Washington State LAST team is available to assist the agency and the family upon request. This resource is extremely valuable and brings LODD-specific knowledge and expertise to assist in planning and executing the service and ensuring that the family and the affected department are properly cared for. The team works for the Agency and acts in a support role. The Public Safety Officer Benefit (PSOB) is a key for survivors, and the LAST team can assist with this process. Planning these services is a very detail-orientated process, the services of the LAST Team is invaluable. Please contact Pat Ellis [pellis@pugetsoundfire.org](mailto:pellis@pugetsoundfire.org) and/or Pat Pawlak [ppawlak@pugetsoundfire.org](mailto:ppawlak@pugetsoundfire.org).

## **Levels of Honor At-A-Glance**

### **Level II**

- Home Department Badge Shrouds/Flag Lowering – Time Protocol
- Family Escort to Ceremony
- Home Agency Cordon of Honor
- Honor Detail Pallbearers
- Honor Guard
- American Flag Presentation – No Presentation Protocol
- Honor Flags
- Bell Ceremony
- Pipes and Drums for Amazing Grace

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A non-LODD death is considered a local area level death. Best practice suggests that the honors be scaled back to fit the situation and location of the service. Since non-LODD services are not attended to the scale of a LODD service, the venue will be smaller. Honor Guard Details and Massed Band attendance will be smaller and available as needed

- Badge Shrouds
  - Worn by the home department from time of death until 1700hrs the day of the funeral/memorial ceremony
- American Flags lowered to half-staff in compliance with local flag lowering policies
  - Lowered at 0800hrs until sunset day of the service
- Vehicle escort to ceremony to include family, remains and a fire apparatus.
  - Remains are transported in a funeral coach or with the family, depending upon disposition and family wishes
- Fire Service Cordon of Honor upon arrival at service venue
- Home Agency Member Cordon of Honor at the start of the service
- Honor Detail Pallbearers
  - Remains will be posted by Honor Guard until the start of the service
- Viewing of remains before the ceremony if in a casket
- Color Guard to post and retire the colors
- Honor Guard
- Fire Service Honors
  - American Flag Presentation
    - Flag is tri-folded prior to service and present to family
  - Honor Flags
    - American Flags flown over the station the firefighter worked
  - Bell Ceremony
  - Pipes and Drums for Amazing Grace

## **Honors Considerations**

### **Military**

Military Honors include a presentation of the American Flag and Taps by a military honor guard and should be rendered graveside. If there is no graveside service, these honors can be rendered at the funeral/memorial. If the fallen firefighter is receiving a flag for their military service, they may also receive a flag for their fire service. It is suggested that the fire service flag be an Honor Flag or a tri-folded fallen firefighter memorial flag.

### **Escort to the Service Location**

For this type of service, there would be no multi-department procession. The family of the fallen firefighter may be escorted to the location of the service in a small procession consisting of a department apparatus, family vehicles and the funeral coach if casket service. The remaining department apparatus would be on static display at the service site, if possible. Police Escort must be pre-arranged with the local law enforcement jurisdiction.

### **After Service Reception**

Depending on the service location, size, and time of day, the reception can be planned according to the wishes of the family and department.

### **Grave Side Service Considerations**

Since the funeral is a formal event, it is suggested that the graveside service be a more intimate event for the family and close friends. It can be formal, with Honor Guard and Pipes and Drums, if the family desires. As there are many different ways the graveside service can be handled, please contact one of the Washington LAST Team Coordinators for details and service outline.

### **Badge Shrouding**

When a Firefighters or Civilian Member of the Fire Service's death is not LODD, the home department will authorize badge shrouds from the time of death to 1700hrs the day of the service.

## **Level II: Non-Line-of-Duty Death Suggested Order of Service**

### **Arrival at Service Location**

The family should arrive at the service location at least one (1) hour prior to the start of the service. Department members and other uniformed personnel should be in formal ranks to receive the family and the urn/casket. All uniformed personnel will salute as family moves from the vehicles to the building.

- Family Escorted to Family Room
- For an Urn
  - Urn can be escorted to the Family Room, the front of service area, or can be left on apparatus until service start time. No matter where the Urn is placed, it needs to be posted by Honor Guard until the time of the service.
- For a Casket
  - Casket is left on apparatus until service start time or carried in to the service area and placed in the front. This would be done for a walk through (Viewing). The casket will be posted by Honor Guard, whether it is left on the apparatus or placed in the front of the service area.

### **Start of Service**

- Cordon of Honor formed 15 minutes prior to service start time
  - Cordon of Honor includes only members of the firefighter's department
  - All other uniformed personal are pre-seated
- Service Announcements
  - Instructions to audience regarding saluting protocols
- Entrance of Family
  - Escorted and Seated by Honor Guard
  - Precession Order
    - Honor Guard
    - Chaplain
    - Flag and Urn/Casket (if not already in place)
    - Family
    - Honor Guard
  - Cordon of Honor Called to Attention and Salute as family passes through
- Cordon of Honor Dismissed to their seats
  - Urn/Casket Watch concludes at the start of the service
- Posting of the Colors – Honor Guard
- Memorial Emblems Placed
- Invocation/Welcome – Chaplain or Family Clergy
- Chief's Welcome
- Remembrances
  - Family/Friends Speakers/Music/Eulogy
- Slide Show
- Honors
  - Military (See Military Considerations)

- Fire Department
  - Any departmental memorial tokens for the family such as a plaque or challenge coin
- American Flag Presentation
  - Casket: Flag tri-folded and placed beside the casket and presented to the family
  - Urn: Flag is tri-folded and presented to the family
- Honor Flags
  - American Flags flown over the station the firefighter worked
- Bell Ceremony
- Amazing Grace
- Closing Comments
- Benediction
- Retiring of the Colors – Honor Guard
- Family Dismissal by Honor Guard
- Fallen Firefighter’s Fire Department Members Dismissal
- Audience Dismissal

This service should last no longer than 90 mins.