

Washington State Fire Service Line of Duty Death Guidelines and Procedures



- **Protocols and Suggest Wording**

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Considerations for Department Coverage Day of Service

Following the notification of a firefighter death, or as departments prepare for the expected loss of a member to a presumptive disease, agencies are inundated with offers of support and assistance. Ensuring that this support is in alignment with the departments policies and procedures and is in alignment with standards of response within a jurisdiction reduces that opportunity for misinterpretation by the community or State agencies.

The goal of this document is to provide a framework that Departments and Labor Groups can reference at these times of great loss and high emotions to ensure that those most impacted by the loss of a brother or sister may attend services in tribute to their life of service.

All of these policies are to serve as “recommendations” that may be expanded on or contracted based on the specific nature of the death. Multiple fatalities at a single scene will create greater logistical and support challenges but those charged with coordination shall be able to utilize this document as a reference to initiate planning.

- Agencies that have suffered a LODD will establish an Agency Coverage Coordinator as a part of the planning team that will serve as a liaison between the department and supporting agencies.
- Once the date, time and location of the service has been defined, a specific request for support or coverage will be made through the Zone/Regional Coordinators.
- Coverage shall be provided to the department for: (in order of priority)
 - On duty crews at station of the fallen member from start of shift through 3 hours following service. Coverage will be from 8 to 12 hours
 - Additional Companies may be requested for additional coverage for only hours of service
- Crew members seeking additional time off (beyond defined hours of provided coverage) are encouraged to seek the use of vacation, shift trades or other contractual language related to time off.
- Agencies in direct contact (common boarder or service areas) are encouraged to provide a like for like apparatus with equal or better personnel staffing levels.
- If additional units are requested by the department, these will be supported with oversight by Zone/Regional Coordinators.
- All units are to return to their home agencies as efficiently as possible to reduce fiscal and response impacts.
- Units participating in processions or actual memorial services will not be considered as “supporting agency” resources for response planning.
- Zone/Regional “Move Ups” may be considered by Zone/Regional Coordinator if/when large events (multiple LODD) are underway to ensure regional coverage
- No agency shall be mandated to provide coverage

Protocols

Badge Shrouding

This best practice document outlines when and who will shroud their badges after the death of a career or volunteer firefighter. Individual fire agencies may use their own discretion when authorizing badge shrouds.

Notification for Statewide Badge Shrouding will be sent out via the Washington State Council of Firefighters, Washington State Fire Chiefs Association, and the Washington State Fire Fighters' Association. Notification for regional badge shrouding will be sent out via the fallen firefighter's department and/or the Washington State Council of Firefighters, Washington State Fire Chiefs Association, and the Washington State Fire Fighters' Association.

LODD

- **Combat Death**
 - When a Firefighter dies in a fire at an emergency scene all fire service agencies in the state will authorize badge shrouds from the time of death to 1700hrs the day of the service.
 - The Home Department will shroud badges for a 30-day mourning period after the service.
- **Medical Death**
 - When a Firefighter dies from a medical incident all fire departments in the region will authorize badge shrouds from the time of death to 1700hrs the day of the service.
 - The fallen firefighter's agency may largely define the region such as the fire service response zone or county. It is recommended that home department reach out to their automatic and mutual aid partners, and any other regional partners as appropriate, such as training or policy consortiums that the agency may be involved with.
 - A department outside the region that has a connection with the firefighter may decide to shroud their badges.
- **Medical Retiree Death**
 - When a retired Firefighter dies of a LODD Cancer the home department will authorize badge shrouds from the day of death to 1700hrs the day of the service.

Non-LODD and Civilian

- 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.

Retiree Non-LODD

- When a retired firefighter dies, badge shrouds will be worn by the home agency the day of the funeral 0800 to 1700 hours.

Extended Service Date

- When the service for fallen firefighter is scheduled for a later date the following guidelines will be followed
 - Combat LODD – Badge shrouds will be worn for a period of 30 days after the death. Badges shrouds will be worn by those attending the service.
 - Medical Death – Badge shrouds will be worn for a period of 2 Weeks after the death. Badges shrouds will be worn by those attending the service.

Flag Display and Lowering

According to US Flag Code, the American Flag can be ordered to half-staff by the President and/or the State Governor. The Governor’s office has indicated that flag display is a local policy issue and will only order flags to be lowered across the State for a combat type line of duty death.

Flags are often lowered for longer duration in the locality where the LODD occurred and are lowered across the state only on the day of the services if directed by the Governor’s Office. Memorial flags can be flown in place of lowering the American Flag at the local authority’s direction.

The following shall guide display of flags:

LODD:

American Flags at all City/Department facilities in compliance with local flag lowering policies may be lowered to half-staff from time of announcement until 24 hours after conclusion of the services.

Non-LODD:

American Flags at all City/Department facilities may be lowered to half-staff on the day of the services from 0800 until conclusion of the services. (Mayor/Manager approval may be necessary.)

Retiree or Civilian Member:

Memorial Flags may be flown from 0800 until conclusion of the services.

Badges will be shrouded the day of the funeral/memorial ceremony until 1700hrs.

Dress Code:

All uniformed members, including off duty attendees, are to wear Class “A” uniforms. Hats shall be worn while outdoors (except during prayers) and removed indoors. If a Class “A” uniform has not been issued the highest level of issued uniform shall be worn.

Exceptions: Honor Guard and Pallbearers/Body Bearers shall remain covered at all times.

Hand Salute Protocol:

In order to be consistent and uniformed, hand salutes will be rendered by uniformed personnel regardless of cover. Those in civilian attire will render a salute in the same manner by placing their hand over their heart.

The hand salute is a three-count movement. The command is “Present, Arms.” On the command of execution (“Arms”), raise the right hand to the head dress. With the tip of the forefinger, touch the rim of the visor slightly to the right of the right eye. The fingers and thumb are extended and joined, palm down. The outer edge of the hand is barely canted downward so that neither the palm nor the back of the hand is visible from the front. The upper arm is horizontal, with the elbow inclined slightly forward and the hand and wrist straight.

Order arms from this salute in a three-count movement. The command is “Order, Arms.” On the command of execution “Arms,” return the hand to the side, resuming the position of attention.

When uncovered or when wearing a head dress without a visor, the hand salute is executed in the same manner as previously described, except the tip of the forefinger touches the forehead near the eyebrow and slightly to the right of the right eye.

Crossed Ladders:

Crossed Ladders should be set up in such a way that the only vehicles that pass under the flag are those of the Family Escort and/or Apparatus Procession. All other vehicles are not to pass under the flag.

Suggested Bell Ceremonies

The Bell Ceremony is often referred to as the Last Alarm. The number of times the Fire Bell should be rung can vary from Department to Department depending on the type of service or death or department tradition. Commonly used for LODD is a 21 Bell Salute which comprises of 7 sets of 3 rings or a 16 Bell Salute which comprises of 4 sets of 4 rings. The 9 Bell Salute, 3 sets of 3 rings are commonly used for non-LODD services.

Once the number of rings has been decided, insert that into the reading.

Bell Ceremony

The fire service of today is ever changing yet is steeped in traditions 200 years old. One such tradition is the sounding of the bell.

In the past, as firefighters began their tour of duty, it was the bell that signaled the beginning of that day's shift. Through the day and night, each alarm was sounded by a bell, it summoned these brave souls to fight fires and save lives often times placing their own lives in jeopardy for the good of their fellow man. When the fire was out and the alarm had come to an end, it was the bell that signaled to all, the completion of that call.

When a firefighter died, it was the mournful toll of the bell that solemnly announced that passing.

We utilize these traditions as symbols which reflect honor and respect on those who have given so much and who have served so well. To symbolize the devotion that these brave souls had for their duty – a special signal of ___ bells, ___ rings, ___ times each, represents the end of our fellow firefighter's duties, and that they would be returning to quarters, out of service.

And so, to (Rank and Name), who has selflessly devoted their life for the good of their fellow man.

His/Her task completed; his/her duties well done. To our brother/sister, his/her last alarm, he's/she is going home.

Suggested Wording for Key Portions of the Service

The following is suggested wording for different parts of the service. This wording can and should be modified to fit the service location and audience.

Pre-Service Protocol Instructions

Thank you for coming today to help us honor the life of (Rank and Name). In today's service there will be a time of memories and stories about (Name) and there will be a time when we will be honoring (Name) service to the (Department) and to the citizens of not only the (Name of City or Area) community, but so many other agencies and lives that (Name) had his fingerprints on.

There will be times today when we will ask you to stand and you will hear the honor guard give the command for "All uniformed personnel to Present Arms." If you are in uniform, we ask that you give a 3 second up salute and hold it until you hear the command to "Order Arms".

If you hear the command for the "Honor Guard to Present Arms", only the honor guard will be rendering a salute at that time.

For those of you here today not in uniform we would like to ask you to join us in rendering honors to (Name) by placing your hand over your heart when you hear the command for "All Uniformed Personnel, Present Arms."

Again, thank you for joining with us today as we honor (Name) life. Will you please stand for the (Presentation of the Colors) or (The entrance of the Family)?

Flag Presentation

(Name of person receiving Flag), on behalf of the _____ Fire Department and the citizens of the _____ community I present you this flag in honor of your (relationship) ____ years of service as firefighter. I want you to know that we miss (name) and that he/she will forever be in our hearts and that we will not forget the bravery and the courage he showed through his/her entire career. Please accept this flag and know that it represents the selfless devotion in which (name) served.

Presenter will stand and Salute Flag

Honors Introduction

To be used to introduce the Honors portion of the service.

It's been said that the fire service is a family, and it's true in so many ways. We stand together through thick and thin, always ready to help each other and it doesn't matter who you work for. A firefighter can go into any fire house across the country and is immediately accepted, not as a friend or a guest, but as a brother or a sister.

Today we mourn the loss of a brother. (Rank and Name) served his department with distinction, he took pride in his profession and he worked hard.

Today is a time for that the brotherhood of firefighters to come together, to honor and remember, and to stand together.

As firefighters, every day we face dangers on many fronts, we are strong, brave, some would say even fearless. Rarely, if ever, will anyone see our tears.

But today is different, today we share an emptiness because of (Name's) death. Today many of us don't feel strong or brave. And today is a day that it's ok to grieve the loss of a brother and we let others see our tears.

As firefighters experience death in our communities, on the 911 calls that we respond to and we have learned to cope with what we see. But dealing with (Name) death is different, it's personal, death has come to one of us and so today we have put on our finest, we have polished and shined our apparatus, we have formed a Cordon of Honor and placed emblems of memorial on the stage. You see, this is how we cope with losing a loved one, a brother we fought fires with, answer aid calls at all hours of the night day with. A brother we laughed with and cried with.

And so today we honor (Department Name) (Rank and Name).

These honors today will include a presentation of the American Flag that has been carefully folded. It is given to (Name) family in honor of his service to the fire service.

The bell will sound the Last Alarm and Amazing Grace will be played and with that we will have rendered the honors that (Rank and Name) deserves for his life of service.

Will the Honor Detail please come forward?

Last Alarm Radio Call

Suggested Wording for the Last Alarm Radio Call

*This radio call can be adapted and changed any way the department deems necessary to fit the situation.

**It is highly recommended that the dispatch center pre-records the radio transition to be played at the service and that it is not dispatched live over the air. There are a lot of opportunities for error when being transmitted live.

Suggested Word without Tones

“(Rank and Last Name)...”

“(Rank and First and Last Name)...”

“(Department, Rank, First and Last Name)...”

“(Department, Rank, First and Last Name), no response...”

“(Rank and Last Name) started his/her fire service career with the ____ Fire Department in _____. (Rank and Last Name) started with the _____ Fire Department on _____ and was appointed to the position of _____ on _____. On (Date of Death) (Rank and Last Name) died (while on duty – or – in the line of duty). The _____ Fire Department would like to thank (Rank and Last Name) for ___ year’s faithful service to the citizens of _____ and to the _____ Fire Department. (Rank and Last Name) you will be missed and will forever be in our hearts.

(Department, Rank, First and Last Name) is now Out of Service, never forgotten,”

Suggested Word with Tones

Tones Played

“It is with heavy hearts that the _____ Fire Department says a final goodbye to (Rank, First and Last Name). (Rank and Last Name) served the _____ Fire Department with pride and dedication for ___ years. His/Her commitment to the citizens of _____ will never be forgotten. It has been said that a firefighter never dies, they just burn in the hearts of those they saved. (Rank and Name) will live forever in our hearts and will always be a part of who we are.

(Department, Rank, First and Last Name) is now out of service, never forgotten.”

Firefighter's Prayer

- Author Unknown

When I am called to duty, God,
wherever flames may rage,
give me strength to save a life,
whatever be its age.
Help me embrace a little child
before it is too late,
or save an older person from
the horror of that fate.
Enable me to be alert,
and hear the weakest shout,
quickly and efficiently
to put the fire out.
I want to fill my calling,
to give the best in me,
to guard my friend and neighbor,
and protect his property.
And if according to Your will
I must answer death's call,
bless with your protecting hand,
my family one and all.