

# CITY OF ANDERSON POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Anderson, South Carolina

<b>DIRECTIVE TYPE</b> General Order	<b>EFFECTIVE DATE</b> September 11, 2020	<b>NUMBER</b> 1526
<b>SUBJECT</b> Death Notifications		
<b>REVISED</b>		
This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this agency for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline		
<b>REFERENCE</b>	<b>AMENDS/SUPERSEDES</b> All Others	
<b>DISTRIBUTION</b> All Personnel	<b>RE-EVALUATION DATE</b> Annual	<b>NO. PAGES</b> 5

- I. PURPOSE:** It is the purpose of this policy to provide supervisory officers of this Department with guidelines for notifying next of kin of the death of a family member.
- II. POLICY:** This Department requires all supervisory officers become familiar with the concepts and procedures set forth in this policy to provide surviving family members with sufficient useful information and support in a manner consistent with professionally accepted crisis intervention techniques.
- III. DEFINITION:**
- A. Next of Kin** - For purposes of this policy, the closest relative of the deceased—for example, spouse, parents, siblings, significant others, and children.
- IV. PROCEDURES:**
- A. Information Gathering and Preparation:** Supervisors frequently make notifications to the next-of-kin of deceased, seriously injured or seriously ill persons. **On all in-city deaths, the Coroner's Office is responsible for the notification of next-of-kin.** On out-of-city deaths, the Coroner's Office in the affected jurisdiction will normally make notification of relatives

living within Anderson City. However, in some cases this may not be possible, and the assistance of the Police Department may be required. Supervisors of this department may be requested to assist or deliver death notification in person except, in rare circumstances, when exigency or other factors dictate notification by telephone. The reason for any telephonic notifications shall be explained in the case file or incident report.

- B. When requested to do so by a Coroner from another jurisdiction, patrol supervisors make the next-of-kin notifications.** Supervisors assigned to this duty are to be prompt and considerate when informing the family. For example, if children are present, it may be better to suggest to the concerned person that you speak to them alone or out of the presence of children. Special care is to be taken with elderly persons receiving notifications. Be prepared to furnish them with a contact person or telephone number where they may receive further information. Notifications of the next-of-kin for seriously injured or seriously ill persons are to be conducted in a manner similar to that of a death notification.
- C.** Supervisory officers shall be prepared and are granted liberal discretion to determine the amount of time necessary to provide survivors with assistance as authorized by this policy.
- D.** Prior to contacting next of kin, notifying supervisory officers shall;
- a. gather and familiarize themselves with essential details concerning the deceased, to include full name, age, race and home address, as well as details of the death, location of the body and personal effects and other pertinent information;
  - b. ensure that the deceased has been positively identified; and
  - c. identify the next of kin of the deceased for purposes of notification, giving specific care to locate the closest relative starting with a spouse and followed by parents, siblings, and then children.
  - d. Other relatives should be contacted only when substantial delays would be required to make contact with next of kin. Supervisory officers should contact a supervisor for guidance when in doubt concerning next of kin or delays in notification.
  - e. When next of kin are located in another state or locality, supervisory officers should contact the appropriate police department and request that they conduct the notification in person and provide timely verification when the notification has been completed.
  - f. Whenever reasonably possible, supervisory officers should gather readily available information concerning the survivors may aid in the notification. This includes, but is not limited to, whether survivors are elderly, disabled, visually or hearing impaired, have medical problems, or do not speak English, in which case a translator or officer who speaks the particular language should be provided. If possible, supervisory officers should obtain the names of the survivor's closest relative, friend, family doctor, and clergyman.



- g. Supervisory officers should not use the police radio to convey information concerning the deceased or related information about the incident or circumstances surrounding the death. Such information shall be conveyed by a secure means of communication, such as cellular phone or land line, and only to those with a need and a right to know.
  - h. The name of the victim shall not be released to the media or other outside sources until the next of kin is notified. If the media has already obtained information related to the death, they should be asked to withhold the information until after the notifications have been completed.
  - i. Where possible, at least two supervisory officers (preferably a male and female team) should be assigned to conduct the death notification.
  - j. Assigned supervisory officers should also request the assistance of the agency on-call chaplain. An annual on-call list is available from the shift supervisor.
  - k. Prior to making the notification, assigned supervisory officers should ensure each is familiar with all pertinent information and decide who will be the primary spokesperson.
  - l. Personal effects of the deceased shall not be delivered to survivors at the time of death notification.
- E. Making Notification:** Upon arrival at the residence or place of business, supervisory officers shall check the accuracy of the location;
- a. identify themselves by name, rank, and departmental affiliation;
  - b. ask permission to enter the residence or, in the case of a business or other location, move to a place of privacy
  - c. request to speak to the immediate survivor; and
  - d. verify the relationship of the survivor to the deceased.
  - e. Every reasonable effort shall be made to make the death notification in the privacy of the survivor's home or in another location away from public scrutiny.
  - f. Prior to making notification, supervisory officers should determine if other members of the family are in the residence. Supervisory officers may wish to bring them together for the notification but should defer to the wishes of the immediate survivor.
  - g. Supervisory officers should address the survivor(s) in a straightforward manner and use easy-to-understand language to briefly explain the circumstances of the incident and the fact that the individual is dead;

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- h. Supervisory officers should not provide graphic aspects of the incident or the individual's death. Police jargon should be avoided.
  - i. Supervisory officers should refer to the deceased in terms reflecting the deceased's relationship to the survivor (e.g., son, daughter).
  - j. Supervisory officers should be prepared for unexpected responses from survivors to include fainting, hysteria, and possible verbal or physical assault.
  - k. Supervisory officers should provide survivors with sufficient time to regain composure following delivery of the death notice.
  - l. When the death occurs in the hospital and the next of kin or other family members are already present, it is the responsibility of the attending physician or other hospital designee to deliver the death notification. Supervisory officers should be available to provide basic information regarding the circumstances surrounding the death.
  - m. Survivors should be informed that other law enforcement officers may need to question them at a future time. If it is imperative that the survivors be questioned immediately after notification, questioning should be conducted compassionately.
- F. Providing Assistance and Referral:** Supervisory officers shall not leave upon completion of the notification until reasonably assured that the survivor has adequate personal control, family or close friend(s) readily available to provide support, or both. In gauging the need for assistance, supervisory officers shall also consider;
- a. the emotional reaction and physical condition of the survivor;
  - b. the availability of other adults in the home;
  - c. responsibility for infants or small children and the elderly or infirm;
  - d. home environment (e.g., evidence of excessive alcohol or drug use, lack of means of financial support, shortage of food, problem with shelter); and
  - e. availability of a support system, including friends, family, close neighbors, access to clergy, means of transportation, etc.
  - f. Supervisory officers should provide any additional information on the incident requested by survivors. While graphic details are not appropriate, supervisory officers should provide information if asked specifically concerning the cause of death, or other general details of the fatality.



- g. Supervisory officers should remain alert to the possible need for medical assistance. When supervisory officers are aware of serious medical conditions in advance of notification, they should place a local medical response unit on alert.
- h. Supervisory officers should be aware of confusion on the part of survivors and should therefore speak slowly and deliberately and write down any pertinent information that the survivor may need. This includes the following;
  - i. Disposition of the body
  - ii. Location of personal effects
  - iii. Identification requirements/procedures
  - iv. Notifying supervisory officers' names, agency, and telephone numbers
  - v. Supervisory officers should assess the physical and emotional well-being of the survivors before departing. Supervisory officers should be reasonably assured survivors can take care of themselves and those for whom they may be responsible. In addition to concerns noted above, supervisory officers should be able to answer "yes" to the following types of questions:
    - a) Is the survivor thinking clearly? That is, does the individual seem to be aware of the officers' presence?
    - b) have some grasp of place and time?
    - c) demonstrate a progressive ability to express himself or herself? And
    - d) begin to demonstrate some grasp of the reality of the death?
    - e) Does the survivor have reasonable control over his or her emotions; or does the individual display shock, no apparent emotion, furious hostility, or the desire to commit suicide?
    - f) Can the survivor cope physically? For example, has the survivor fainted or displayed debilitating weakness or emotional collapse?
    - g) Does the survivor have an adequate support system that can be relied upon?
    - h) Supervisory officers should not leave a lone survivor unattended until all reasonable efforts have been made to garner first-hand support from the survivor's family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, family clergy, department chaplains, crisis counselors, or other community social service agency. Supervisory officers should provide or arrange for transportation of essential individuals where necessary.
    - i) Notifying Supervisory officers should conduct a follow-up within 24 hours with any survivor when there is concern for the survivor's well-being.

By order of:

  
Jim Stewart, Chief of Police

9-11-20  
Date

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