

DALTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

	<i>Effective Date</i> May 1, 1998	<i>Number</i> GO91-4.19
<i>Subject</i> Emergency Death, Serious Injury, or Serious Illness Notification		
<i>Reference</i> CALEA Standard – 55.2.6		<i>Revised</i> May 24, 2022 April 23, 2024
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I. Policy

It is the policy of the Dalton Police Department that death notifications and, when possible, notifications of seriously injured or seriously ill persons be made personally by members of the Department and that appropriate assistance or referrals be offered, when needed, to help ease the trauma of the news. When available, members of the Department's Chaplain Program should be requested to deliver or assist in delivering notifications.

II. Background

The delivery of emergency notifications is a task that no Officer likes but one which may be called upon to perform as part of his / her police duties. The news, which is being brought, may, in a moment, destroy the very basis of the individual's world. As the notifier, it is the Officer's duty to deliver this personal news in a concise, straightforward, and compassionate way. The Officer should approach the notification knowing it is his / her role to spend whatever time is necessary to calm and comfort the survivor(s) or next-of-kin and to assist in gaining access to any other support persons or services that may be needed.

III. Gathering Information

- A. Gather essential details surrounding the deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill person and the immediate survivor or next-of-kin (name, age, gender, race, home address, location, nature and time of death, location of the body, etc.).
- B. Determine the closest relative. If unavailable, or if there will be some delay in making contact, determine who the next closest relative would be.
- C. The most immediate relative should be the first to have knowledge of the death, serious injury, or serious illness outside of any persons who were involved at the scene of the incident.
- D. If possible, try to obtain any details about the next-of-kin that could create a problem during the notification, such as physical or mental health problems or the inability to understand English.
- E. Avoid using the police radio to communicate information concerning the deceased,

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seriously injured, or seriously ill person.

IV. **Making the Notification**

- A. If possible, Officers should be accompanied by another individual during a death, serious injury, or serious illness notification. Time permitting, efforts shall be made to contact the on-call Chaplain to assist with the notification.
- B. Verify the address of the survivor's or next-of-kin's home to make sure it is correct.
- C. A deceased person's personal effects should not be brought to the home during the notification.
- D. Officers should request to be permitted inside the home before the actual notification to ensure the survivor's or next-of-kin's need for personal privacy is not compromised during this traumatic moment.
- E. Before beginning the notification, determine whether other adult members of the immediate family are at home. If so, they should be brought together and told all at once so that the Officer will not need to repeat the notification and to spare the present family members the task of doing this. It is preferred that young children be excused until their parents can speak to them later.
- F. It is important that the Officer speak in plain language and in a straightforward fashion. Graphic details regarding the cause of death or injury, particularly in cases of violent accidents or homicides, should not be discussed at this time (i.e. decapitation).
- G. It is best to refer to the deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill person by first name or by the relationship to the survivor or next-of-kin (son, daughter, etc.). Using references, such as "body," "corpse," "deceased," or "the victim," might be regarded as callous or uncaring by the family members.

V. **Potential Reactions**

- A. Officers should be alert to any atypical reaction to the notification. Survivors or next-of-kin may:
 - 1. Faint or the news may precipitate a heart attack, or other physical reaction, that requires emergency first aid or professional medical attention.
 - 2. Become hysterical or angry and turn their hostility on the notifier.
- B. The importance of using two individuals for notifications is evident in both cases.

VI. **Answering Questions and Making Referrals**

- A. After the survivor or next-of-kin has regained a degree of composure, the notifier should be prepared to answer questions regarding procedures for making funeral arrangements and other police procedures. This should be kept as simple as possible at this early stage.
- B. Notifiers should avoid becoming involved in discussions about life insurance, social

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security benefits, etc. The persons making the notification should make sure that all essential details are written down and that their names and phone numbers are left with the individual.

- C. To assess the survivor's or next-of-kin's physical and emotional well-being, the notifier should determine if the individual has reasonable control over his or her emotions and if support persons, such as close friends or family members, should be summoned. The Officer should remain with the survivor or next-of-kin until other support persons arrive.

VII. **Delivering Notifications from Other Agencies**

Should any outside agency request assistance in delivering a death notification or other emergency message, sufficient information shall be obtained to answer obvious questions which might be asked by the next-of-kin. The guidelines within this policy should be followed in making an outside agency notification.

This policy supersedes any previous policies issued.

BY ORDER OF

CHIEF OF POLICE

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