

Guidelines For Conducting Fire Department Funerals

Published By
Pennsylvania Fireman
January, 1983
Reprinted May, 1999

The Guidelines in this special section of the May, 1999 edition of the PA FIREMAN were compiled by the Officers of the Lancaster Bureau of Fire in 1977 and were based on their observance and experience along with a Handbook on Military Etiquette, a guideline used by the Philadelphia Fire Department and the assistance of a local Funeral Director.

These Guidelines are offered to assist other fire departments who may wish to honor a fallen comrad. The order of service was provided by the Cumberland County Firemen's Association.

We suggest you file this copy for future reference.

*This Section is designed so ypu can cut and
remove from fireman and file for refference*

Operational Procedures For The Death Of A Member or Retiree

Section I Responsibilities of Notification

A. Death in the Line of Duty

1. Upon the death of a member in the line of duty of the Officer in charge if other than Chief shall immediately notify the Chief of the Department.

2. The Chief or his Designated Representative (DR) shall notify the next of kin.

3. The Chief or his DR shall notify the Mayor or Township Official.

4. Within a reasonable time after the death of a member in the line of duty and at a time when all companies are in quarters, the Chief or his DR shall instruct the dispatcher to transmit the following message: (This applies if the department has more than one station or announcement is to be made to all departments on a central dispatching system.

a. "Attention all companies, standby to receive an announcement from the Chief.

b. Upon receipt of such an announcement the man on watch will, if the company is not in roll call formation, cause the company to assemble in formation.

c. The Chief or his DR will transmit a message prepared and approved by the Chief, similar to the following:

"It is with deep regret that the Chief announces the death of _____ (Rank, Name, Company) _____ who lost his life in the line of duty while participating in operations on Fire Call _____ (Number, Location, Date and Time.)"

d. Upon receipt of this message the man on watch shall record the same in the company's log book.

e. Upon receipt of a notice of a member killed in the line of duty the station flag shall be placed at half staff and the front of the station shall be draped with black bunting until seven (7) days after the funeral.

5. A news conference or a formal news release should be arranged as soon as possible so that factual information is available for dissemination.

6. The Chief shall designate an Officer-In-Charge (OIC) who shall be responsible for the department's involvement in the funeral procedures.

B. Death Other Than in the Line of Duty

1. When the Chief learns of the death of an active or retired member, he or his DR will instruct the dispatcher to notify the companies of the death in the following manner:

"It is with deep regret that the the Chief announces the death of Rank (Retiree) Name, on/at Time/Date."

2. Upon receipt of such official notification from the dispatcher of the death of a member or retiree, the station flag shall be lowered to half staff until the day following the funeral.

3. As soon as it is convenient the Chief or his DR shall notify the Mayor's office, or township officer of the reported death.

4. The Chief shall designate an Officer-In-Charge (OIC) who shall be responsible for the Bureau's involvement in the funeral procedures.

NOTE: Some cities have adopted the policy that flags on city buildings other than on fire stations not be lowered to half staff for retirees, only for active employees.

Section II

Responsibilities Of The Officer In Charge (OIC)

A. The OIC shall contact the family of the deceased member and, in coordination with the funeral director, establish the family's desires as to Fire Dept. participation in the funeral. He shall assist the family in any way. He shall offer the fire department's services for the following situations:

1. A funeral, at home, funeral home, church or cemetery; involving use of pumper, active pallbearers, honorary pallbearers and Funeral Detail, color guard and buglar. (This type of honor shall be reserved for those members killed in the line of duty.)

2. A semi-formal funeral at home, funeral home, church or cemetery involving active pallbearers, honorary pallbearers, honor guard and Funeral Detail.

3. A non-formal funeral, at home, church or cemetery; there being no fire department involvement, other than members attending in a passive roll either in the viewing and/or funeral service.

4. Private funeral, at home, church or cemetery; respecting the family's wishes to have no outside participation at the funeral.

Note: With the exception of those honors reserved for members killed in the line of duty, any or all of the fire department's honors may be part of a member's funeral ceremony. The desires of the family shall be paramount and shall be given the fullest respect.

B. Having established the wishes of the deceased, the OIC shall carry out any or all of the following in order to realize these wishes. The OIC shall continually be in communication with the Funeral Director as he arranges for the Fire Dept.'s participation.

1. Normal Funeral Arrangements.

a. Arrange for an Honor Guard to stand duty during the viewing, minimum of four.

b. Arrange for Active Pallbearers; six (6) plus an officer. Arrange for necessary equipment.

c. Arrange for Honorary Pallbearers (Family, Company Officers, Retirees, etc.)

d. Arrange for Funeral Detail (All uniformed members in attendance)

e. Arrange for Bugler

f. Arrange for Color Guard

g. Obtain American Flag for casket. (Funeral Director secures flag for veterans only)

h. Provide all members of the Fire Dept. with the information necessary to carry out their rolls in the funeral.

i. Survey the area of the Services and make provisions for placement of all attending units and provide information for map preparation.

j. Designate an area of assembly for all attending Chief Officers and dignitaries (preferably in a building, funeral home, church, school or fire station.)

k. Designate an area of assembly for all other members of the department and visiting fire fighters.

Note: This area should be a block or two away from the funeral home or church, preferably at a fire station, school or park where ample parking and assembly area are available. This group will then march as a unit to the church or funeral home to act as Funeral Detail.

l. Obtain sufficient rolls of black plastic tape along with small round tipped scissors that can be carried in a pocket and make them available in the assembly areas for all uniformed personnel to place a horizontal black band over the breast badge of all participating officers and men.

m. The OIC or his delegated representative will coordinate all commands during the movement of the casket as prescribed in this directive

2. Special Arrangements for Formal Funeral

a. A fire department pumper(s) designated by the Chief will be appropriately prepared with flowers and black bunting and stripped of hose for use to transport the casket.

Note: In case of multiple joint funeral, vans or station wagons could be substituted for pumpers.

b. Arrange for the proper placement of all vehicles that will participate in the funeral procession.

Note: If a joint service is held and enternment will be at two or more locations, separate processions must be established according to guest preference.

c. A map of the areas involved will be prepared to expedite the proceedings and assist out of town guests, map should include:

1. Location of fire department(s)
2. Location of Funeral Homes
3. Location of Church
4. Location of Chief Officer and Dignitary Assembly Area
5. Location of Firefighters Assembly Area
6. Location of Auxiliary Parking Areas
7. Location of Hotel(s) for out of town guests
8. Location of vehicles for funeral procession
9. Route of funeral procession
10. Location of cemetary and grave in cemetary
11. Location of auxiliary parking at cemetary
12. Location of food service areas
13. Separation map or coding on a single map should designate location of multiple funerals and/or processions as required.

14. Any other information deemed necessary

d. On the above map or a separate sheet a copy of a diagram should show the proper arrangement and movement of personnel for various ceremonies and locations as necessary.

e. Arrangements for reproduction of sufficient quantities of the above two maps and firm commitment on delivery should be established.

f. The OIC or his designated representative will coordinate all commands during the movement of the casket and personnel.

g. Proper arrangement with the Police Dept. should be made to handle traffic and parking at the various locations involved and along the funeral procession route.

3. Photography coverage

a. Fire department photographer or private photographer should be assigned to cover the funeral.

4. Media Arrangements

a. Establish guidelines for TV and press

1. At the Church inside and/or outside

2. Funeral Home inside and/or outside

3. Cemetary - general photo coverage and/or coverage of the immediate grave

5. Arrangements for out-of-town guests

a. Transportation

1. Airports

2. Hotel, Motels

3. Funeral Services

4. Cemetary

5. Food service areas

Note: Where there are insufficient fire department cars consider use of other municipal cars, surplus police vehicles and private vehicles of department members. Provide signs for these vehicles approximately 1-1/2 feet long by 6 inches to read "FIRE DEPARTMENT COURTESY CAR"

b. Arrange for housing as necessary for overnight guests

c. Arrange for food service areas

1. For Chief Officers and dignitaries

2. Firefighters

Note: Food service may be needed between morning and afternoon funeral services or following a funeral service at one or more locations. Consider help from the fire department Ladies Auxiliary or Auxiliary of mutual aid companies or caterer. Depending on the cause and number of personnel involved in a fire or emergency related fatal accident the number of out-of-town guests could range from a few hundred to several thousand.

Section III
Responsibilities Of Members

A. All members will at all times maintain a clean, pressed and properly fitted uniform for use at funerals and/or any other funeral functions (if a department has uniforms).

B. All off duty members and those on duty members, upon proper relief from normal duty, should make every effort to honor their fellow members by attending the funeral services.

C. All members of the fire department shall acquaint themselves with the prescribed courtesies of the fire department's funeral procedures as outlined in this operation guide.

D. Honor Guard

1. At least four (4) honor guards are required
2. One member of the Honor Guard shall be designated as the Officer of the Guard (OG). He shall be responsible for obtaining the necessary equipment (white gloves, black badge bands, etc.) and for the scheduling of the Honor Guard members.
3. Two Honor Guards, one for the head and one for the foot of the casket, shall be scheduled at ten (10) minute intervals.
4. Honor Guards uniform shall be dress uniform or dark suits, white gloves and black badge bands.
5. Honor Guard shall stand at attention at their assigned positions for the duration of their ten (10) minute tour of duty.
6. Honor Guard may be used during viewings and prior to the service as custom dictates.

E. Honorary Pallbearers

1. Men designated as Honorary Pallbearers, usually retirees or members of the deceased's company, shall at all times move ahead of the casket as it is moved.
2. The Honorary Pallbearers shall sit on the designated side of the church during the service.
3. Dress for Honorary Pallbearers:
 - a. retirees will normally wear civilian clothes
 - b. active members shall be in dress uniform if department has them.

D. Active Pallbearers

1. The Active Pallbearer Detail shall consist of six (6) pallbearers plus and officer.
2. The officer of the detail shall contact the funeral director for detailed instructions.
3. The pallbearers will remain covered at all times while acting in that capacity and will wear white gloves.
4. The pallbearers will not salute while acting in that capacity.
5. The flag shall be placed over the casket with the blue field at the head over the deceased's left shoulder.
6. If the casket arrives at the church from the funeral home the Pallbearer Detail shall position themselves to receive the casket in front of the church, see diagram.
7. During the service the pallbearer detail will sit on designated side of the church with the funeral detail.
8. At the cemetery, after placing the casket over the grave site and upon the officer's command, the detail shall raise the flag to waist high over the casket and hold it there during the committal service. After the committal service is read, taps may be sounded. The flag is then folded, upon the officer's command, in the prescribed military manner and presented to the next of kin by the officer of the Detail.
9. The Detail, on orders of the officers, shall take a place with the funeral detail.
10. During the graveside service, where the flag is not draped over the casket, the Pallbearer Detail, after placing the casket over the grave site, on orders of the officer shall step back with the funeral detail and follow the procedures for the funeral detail.

E. Funeral Detail

1. All members of the department, not otherwise detailed, will act as the Funeral Detail, in dress uniform, no gloves required.
2. The Funeral Detail will arrive as a group from the staging area prior to the arrival of the funeral coach at the Church and take a position in front of the Church on the right hand side as indicated in the diagram.
3. For formal and semi-formal funerals the Funeral Detail will take a position in front of the Church in two (2) facing ranks with senior officers closest to the Church.
4. As the Active Pallbearers move the casket from the coach the Funeral Detail will be called to the attention by the OCI. If the casket is draped with the flag the OIC will order a hand salute as the casket passes. The command shall be present arms! "The command to end the salute shall be "order arms!"
5. After the casket passes the OIC will order "at ease" and the Funeral Detail will file into the church according to rank and sit in the designated area of the church. Head covering is removed upon entering the church.
6. After the service the Funeral Detail, on order of OIC, will file out of the Church and in the case of a formal funeral take a position on the right of the entry as indicated in the diagram.
7. If semi-formal service, the Funeral Detail will form facing ranks on both sides of the entry with senior officers closest to hearse.
8. As the flag draped casket is brought out of the Church, the detail is brought to attention and a hand salute is executed on order of the OIC.
If no flag covers casket, ranks stand at attention.
9. The Funeral Detail rides as a group in designated cars to the cemetery or between the funeral home and Church.
10. The Funeral Detail at the cemetery again form two ranks according to rank from the location of the hearse to the grave site, with officers closest to grave. (See diagram)
11. As the flag draped casket is removed from the hearse by the active pallbearers, the Funeral Detail executes a hand salute on order of the OIC. (Present Arms). If the casket is not covered by the flag they stand at attention.
12. After casket is placed over the grave the Funeral Detail forms ranks in front of the grave, highest rank on right. (See diagram)
13. If taps are sounded, uniformed members should execute hand salute on order of the OIC.
14. During religious grave side services all personnel will bow at words "Let us Pray."
15. All personnel except the active pallbearers while holding the flag will follow the example of the officiating clergy. If he uncovers they will uncover, if he remains covered, they will remain covered.

Note: These procedures and formations are accepted courtesies but act as a guideline only and may be adjusted depending upon existing conditions at funeral home, church, etc.

People You May Want To Notify

PA State Fire Commissioner David Smnith	1-800-670-3473
State Fire Association Chaplain Winfiled E. Engler	717-838-1870
State Firemen's Association Secretary	570-368-3645
Local and Regional Fire Association Secretary	
PA Public Safety Officers Benefit Program, T. Frances Grimm	717-787-1768
<i>The July 1, 1998 to June 30, 1999 PA Benefit is \$55,313</i>	
Federal Public Safety Officers Benefit Program	202-307-0635
<i>The 1999 Federal Fiscal Year Benefit is \$143,943</i>	888-744-6513@

Section IV
Inventory of Necessary Equipment

- A. On hand in fire department stock room
1. Color guard standards
 2. Flag for casket
 3. Black plastic tape and/or elastic bands
 4. Round tipped scissors
 5. 12 pairs of assorted sizes of white gloves
 6. Sign to read "Fire Dept. Courtesy Car", approximately 6 should be inventoried.
 7. Black bunting for stations.
- B. Where to obtain necessary items
1. Flags - City Hall - or identify closest supplier
 2. Color Guards - American Legion or VFW
 3. Band - School or other local group
 4. Additional white gloves (Army & Navy Store or identify closest local supplier)
 5. Additional Vehicles
 - City - Borough - Township
 - Police Department
 - Car Dealers
 - Members of the fire department
 6. Signs - identify a local sign painter who would be available on short notice.
 7. Black bunting - identify local supplier

(EXAMPLE)
Honor Guard Roster

Name of Deceased _____

Date of Deceased _____

As of _____ (date) at _____ Hours (time) the department will provide an Honor Guard for the Funeral of _____ (Name of Deceased) who will/will not be buried in his uniform.

Viewing will be held at:

Name _____

Address _____

Day and Date _____

Time _____

Funeral will be held at:

Name _____

Address _____

Day and Date _____

Time _____

Honor Guards will be scheduled at 10 minute intervals between _____ and _____ Hours, (day and date).

Honor Guards Name _____ (Time) from _____ to _____

Honor Guards Name _____ (Time) from _____ to _____

Honor Guards Name _____ (Time) from _____ to _____

Honor Guards Name _____ (Time) from _____ to _____

Honor Guard Uniform will be _____

Department will furnish white gloves and black breast badge bands.

The Firemen's Memorial Hymn

(tune — Abide With Me)

In fond remembrance gathered here today,
Tribute to pay to brothers passed away;
Garlands of flowers placed upon the dead,
Spring's brightest blossoms deck their quiet bed.

Reveille

When duty called, our brothers they would go,
Ever undaunted, met the fiery foe.
May guardian angels o'er them vigil keep,
While they lie resting in eternal sleep.

Taps

Father in heaven, guide us on our way,
Through the storm and sunshine to eternal day;
And when our duty here on earth is o'er
Vouchsafe our journey to the gladdened shore.

FIREFIGHTER'S PRAYERS

When I am called to duty, God
Wherever flames may rage,
Give me strength to save some 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
To the weakest shout
And quickly and efficiently
To put the fire out.

I want to fill my calling and
To give the best in me.
To guard my every neighbor and
Protect his property.

And if according to my fate
I am to lose my life
Please bless with your protecting hand
My family and my wife.

Lord, grant me courage
to face and conquer my fears
to share and endure the ordeal
of those who need me...

Grant me strength of heart and body
to bear whatever burden
might be placed upon me,
and to deliver to safety
all those placed within my care...

Give me concern for others
the compassion to comfort,
and the love to serve unselfishly
whenever I am called...

And please, Lord, through it all,
be at my side...

Memorial Service For Departed Firemen

(It is suggested that members of the fire department meet at their station and march, with their chaplain, if possible, to the funeral home. If no chaplain, the chief or a department member of any clergyman can act as the leader. The group shall enter the home together and form two lines with their clergyman or leader and local chief and officers near the casket.)

LEADER: O God, who heals the broken in heart, and binds up their wounds, look in tender pity and compassion upon your servants whose joy has turned to mourning. Leave them not comfortless, but grant that they may be drawn closer to one another and to you by their common sorrow. Fill their souls with the light and comfort of your presence. Grant unto them such a vision of that life where in all mysteries shall be revealed, and all tears be wiped away, that they may be able to endure. Dwell with them and be their God, until the day breaks and the shadows flee.

We are gathered here on this occasion to pay our respects to a brother fireman who has answered his final call on this earth. He was a loyal member of this association. He stood forth as a real man, highly regarded by his brother firemen.

Let the words of the 23rd Psalm give comfort:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want: He makes me lie down in green pastures.

He leads me beside still waters: He restores my soul.

He leads me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I fear no evil, for you are with me.

Your rod and your staff comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows.

Surely, goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,

and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

There is a season for everything: A time for every occupation under heaven...a time for giving birth...a time for dying...a time for planting... a time for uprooting what has been planted...a time for laughter...a time for mourning...a time for dancing...a time for loving...a time for hating...

What does man gain for the effort that he makes? I contemplate the tasks that God gives to mankind for labor. All that he does is apt for its time: but though he has permitted man to conserve time in it wholeness, except in pleasure and enjoyment while he lives. And when man eats and drinks and finds happiness in his work this is a gift from God.

Minister: Let Us Pray...

O Lord, we implore you to grant this mercy to your departed servant that he who in his desire served his fellow man may not receive punishment for his misdeeds: so that as charity and love unite him with us on earth, your mercy may unite with you in heaven. Amen.

Let us consider the words of Psalm 90:

Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations, before the mountains were brought forth or ever you had formed the earth and the world.

From everlasting to everlasting you are God.

You turn man back to the dust and say "turn back O children of men."

For a thousand years in your sight are but as yesterday when it is past, or as a watch in the night.

You sweep men away: They are like a dream, like grass which is renewed in the morning:

In the evening it fades and withers.

For we are consumed by your anger: By your wrath we are overwhelmed.

You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of our countenance.

For all our days pass away under your wrath, our years come to an end like a sigh.

The years of our life are three score and ten, or even by reason of strength fourscore:

Yet their span is but toil and trouble: They are soon gone and we fly away.

Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?

So teach us to number our days, that we may get a heart of wisdom.

Return, O Lord, how long?

Have pity on your servants: Satisfy us in the morning with your steadfast love, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.

Make us glad as many days as you have afflicted us, and as many years as we have seen evil, let your work be manifest to your servants, and your glorious power to their children.

Let the favor of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish you the work of our hands upon us.

Our second scripture reading is taken from St. Matthew:

"When the Son of Man comes in his glory escorted by all the angels then he will take his seat on his throne of glory. All the nations will be assembled before him and he will separate men one from another as the shepherd separates sheep from goats. He will place the sheep on his right hand and the goats on his left. Then the king will say to those on his right hand, "Come you whom my Father has blessed: take for your heritage the kingdom prepared for you since the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food: I was thirsty and you gave me drink: I was a stranger and you made me welcome: naked and you clothed me: sick and you visited me: in prison and you came to me. Then the virtuous will say to him in reply: "Lord, when did I see you hungry and feed you: thirsty and gave you drink?" " When did I see you a stranger and make you welcome: naked and clothe you: sick or in prison and go to see you?" And the king will answer, "I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me."

Minister: Let Us Pray...

O God, who said as long as you did it for one of these, my children, you did it for me, grant a fitting reward to your fireman who has given his time and energy for the good of others. To him who gave up his rest at all hours of the day and night, grant eternal rest: To him who has answered his final alarm on earth, grant a place of refreshment, joy, and peace....Amen.

LEADER: Because of this man and other fireman, our lives are free: Because of them our families live: because of them our homes are blessed. Let us not enshroud their memory with thoughts of sorrow. Tears or words of sympathy cannot bring them back the comfort of those loving hands. Only the solemn pride of service to others is theirs who live to remember.

Fireman and Friends, let us here pledge ourselves anew to united service, to consecrate and dedicate our work by devotion to mutual helpfulness in the protection of those left behind. And finally, to you, the family, the relatives, and the intimate friends, of our departed fireman, we realize how futile are mere words to express our deep and abiding sympathy in your loss. May you be consoled with our promise for continued devotion to firefighting and for the protection of property and life of our fellowmen. The words of the poem "The Abiding Love" are significant: It singeth low in every heart, we hear it each and all - a song of those who answer not, however we may call: They throng the silence of the breast, we see them as of yore-the kind, the brave, the sweet, who walk with us no more. 'Tis hard to take the burden up, when these have laid it down: they brightened all the joy of life, they softened every frown: But O, 'tis good to think of them, when we are troubled sore! Thanks be to God that such have been, although they are no more. More homelike seems the vast unknown since they have entered there: to follow them were not so hard, wherever they may fare, they cannot be where God is not, on any sea or shore: Whate'er betides, thy love abides, our God, forever more.

Minister: And now, let us pray together the Lord's Prayer....

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory now and forever. Amen.

LEADER: Holy Father, in these moments of remembrance, lift our hearts and minds above the shadowy darkness of death to the light of your presence. We thank you for the life of our comrade now removed from our association. We are grateful for his devotion to a fireman's duty, for his dedication to the preservation of life and property, for the way he faced danger in his service to the community.

We ask the comfort of your blessing upon his family. May they be sustained by pleasant memories, a living hope, the compassionate friends, and the pride of duty well done. Grant them peace and freedom from fear. Finally, we pray your guidance and strength for those who continue to battle the fiery foe. Grant safety to those who engage in the constant war against the destructive force of the flame and explosion. Keep them who devote themselves to the work of a fireman in your hands. So may men be free of the danger of fire...Amen.

Minister: The Blessing...

The Lord bless you and keep you,
The Lord make his face shine upon you and give you peace,
The Lord lift up the light of his presence upon you.
Now and always...Amen