

## **Hamden Police Department General Orders**

---

**Policy Number:** 024-012

**Effective Date:** May 15, 2023

**Section:** Patrol

**Rescinds:** April 12, 2019

**Title:** Death and Injury Notifications

**Approved By:** Hamden Police Commission

**Approval Date:** May 11, 2023

### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this directive is to set forth the policies and procedures of the Hamden Police Department regarding death and injury notifications.

### **POLICY**

It shall be the policy of the Hamden Police Department to ensure that the nearest relative/guardian of a deceased person is quickly and compassionately notified in person of a death. In cases in which that relative/guardian resides within Hamden, a sworn Hamden Police Department officer shall personally make the notification.

Such officer shall ensure that a person who is a next of kin of the deceased is notified of such person's death in accordance with this policy. The Hamden Police Department shall ensure such notification is made as soon as practicable, but not later than twenty-four hours following the identification of such deceased person, except as provided below.

If a peace officer is unable to notify a person who is a next of kin of a deceased person as required, such officer shall document the reason for the failure or delay of notification and any attempts made to make such notification.

If a next of kin of a deceased person resides in a town in which the peace officer does not serve, such officer may notify such next of kin of such person's death in accordance with this policy, or provide notice to the law enforcement agency that serves such town in which such next of kin resides, which agency shall ensure notification in a manner provided for in such agency's applicable guidelines.

It shall be the policy of this Department to perform timely notification to relative/guardians of victims involved in incidents resulting in injury, or the need for medical treatment.

# **Hamden Police Department**

## **General Orders**

---

### **PROCEDURES**

#### **A. Collecting Information**

1. Prior to making any notification, officers should obtain as much information as possible. Officers should attempt to obtain the following information:
  - a. name of the deceased
  - b. nature or cause of death
  - c. when and where the death occurred
  - d. where the deceased is and restrictions on recovery (legal issues)
  - e. if any identification is required by a next-of-kin
  - f. If the deceased needs to be claimed, the address where the deceased is located
  - g. a contact person, including telephone number
  - h. the relationship of the person(s) to be contacted to the deceased
2. In instances where the officer is performing a “locate and notify” assignment (the death event is not the officer’s case or is in another jurisdiction), the officer should verify any telephone contact numbers prior to the notification to ensure that the first active contact attempt by the family is successful.
3. Officers shall not leave impersonal messages (notes). Messages that are left should inform the family member to contact the officer directly. Family members should not be directed to contact any other person first. Officers must keep a record of all attempted contacts, whether successful or not.
4. Family members must be advised that they cannot immediately claim the deceased. Officers must inform family contact members:
  - a. How details will continue to develop
  - b. How the investigation is progressing and what needs to be accomplished
  - c. The supervisor of the investigation
  - d. What the family members need to do

Unless at-scene identification is necessary, next-of-kin or family members should not be brought to a crime or accident scene.

## **Hamden Police Department General Orders**

---

### **B. Timing and Consideration of the Setting**

1. Law enforcement notification of family or household members should be delivered promptly, as soon after the event as is practicable, but not later than 24 hours after the identification of the deceased. While there is no “good” time to deliver sad news, officers need to keep in mind that notifications delivered in the middle of the night or in circumstances or settings that themselves present significant distractions require particular care and consideration. Arranging for a private room for the conversation is recommended.
2. Two officers should be assigned to deliver death notifications whenever possible, with at least one officer in uniform.
3. Officers should make an effort to not leave a survivor alone after a notification.

### **D. Personal Introduction.**

1. Since sensitivity and compassion are enhanced with understanding and association, whenever possible officers should seek the assistance and accompaniment of clergy, a relative or other known persons.
2. An officer’s opening remarks must be clear, and in plain language to avoid misinterpretation and confusion. It is of utmost importance to project concern and empathy.

### **E. Translating.**

1. If the family or household member does not speak English, the officer will need a translator. Occasionally, it will appear necessary to use a child in the household to assist but that should be avoided. Children should not be expected or requested to assume the psychological burden of translating a death notification and officers should not rely on children to accurately translate this type of critical information. Instead, the officer should ask the child to recommend a nearby adult who also speaks English and can be of assistance or utilize the language line via your department issued cell phone.

## **Hamden Police Department General Orders**

---

### **F. Delivering the Message and Its Expression.**

1. Officers should begin with a very brief “preparation statement” reviewing the circumstances surrounding the death to the extent it is known. The family or household members will be anxious and will not benefit from an involved, lengthy report. Still, a brief statement will provide a few seconds for the family to mentally prepare.
2. The “core message” should include the deceased’s name, not a relationship (son, daughter, husband, wife) as it may not be the same relationship for each person present and it may be incorrect. The word “died” is very important and should be repeated. Terms such as expired, passed or fatally injured are confusing to people under stress. The message should not be misunderstood. Messages should also avoid impersonal words such as body, remains or corpse.
3. Officers should express empathy. Officers should be prepared to listen and answer questions honestly, to the extent that they can do so. The notifying officer should remain calm and offer respectful support.

### **G. Information and Assistance.**

1. The officer may be asked to notify other people. The officer may be asked “how” they should relay this information to others. At this time, it may be appropriate to try and locate additional supporting members of the family or local clergy. Officers should make every attempt at assisting family members in contacting others.
2. If children who are in school need to be informed immediately, most schools have a counselor who may be called upon to assist with the communication. Some employers may have a “human resources” department which can provide support as well.
3. All questions pertaining to organ or tissue donation need to be referred to a hospital staff or family doctor. Autopsy requirements are governed by law but issues relating to autopsy or even transportation of remains frequently involve cultural, ethnic or religious questions.
4. In the event the death relates to an incident involving law enforcement, the family member should be provided with the case incident report number and the name of the investigating officer.
5. Officers should inform the family member that they are under no obligation to speak to the media

## **Hamden Police Department General Orders**

---

### **H. Dealing with Property.**

1. If there is any property of the deceased, it shall be taken to the property lockers for safe keeping. A report should be completed, and all property should be accounted for while being entered into the LEAS property tab. Arrangements should be made for the next-of-kin to obtain the property in a dignified manner.
2. Officers should inquire about the need to secure any property of the deceased in the absence of a family member taking responsibility. For example, the person notified may not be able to also secure a deceased's residence and related property. All reasonable efforts must be made to arrange for appropriate security of such property.
3. If any property of a deceased, or of a person seriously ill or injured, is to be brought to any family or household member, or secured from them for safe keeping, the use of any "garbage bags" or similar containers is to be avoided. Property to be returned should be folded (e.g., clothing) or otherwise appropriately presented. A list of what is to be turned over to family should be given and discussed prior to its presentation since it may include items that are damaged, stained, ripped, or those that have been cut off a person.