



# Taking Care of Our Own

## *A Resource Guide for Line of Duty Deaths*

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## I. **Plan Ahead! Pre-Incident Planning**

The purpose of a preplan is to offer assistance to all members of the fire department's service family, most particularly the deceased firefighter's family. The time spent in designing, and the information included in a preplan, should help the fire department members and the fire department's extended family respond to a Line of Duty Death in a professional and compassionate manner.

As we begin to create a preplan it is important to focus on some basic definitions:

- A **Line of Duty Death** (LODD) occurs when the death of a firefighter is directly caused from elements during the performance of duty and/or the firefighter dies as a result of injuries received during the performance of duty.
- The term **Survivor** is meant to include all immediate family members, including spouses, all children including legally adopted children, parents, siblings, grandchildren and significant others. Information about a member's immediate family should be included in your fire department's personnel data system. At the very least, a personnel information data form should be completed and updated each year.
- **Benefits** are defined as any financial payments, scholarships, tax benefits and special programs that may be available for the immediate survivors of the fallen firefighter.

### A. **Pre-Incident Plan Components**

The following information comes from fire departments from around the country, as well as from the Colorado Fallen Firefighters Foundation and the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation to assist you in creating a preplan to meet the tragedy of a Line of Duty Death. The information provided suggests how to manage a LODD, but by no means stipulates the level of support that your fire department may choose to offer. Your fire department must determine what the best preplan is for you and your fire service family.

Please note job descriptions for ***Liaisons*** and ***Coordinators*** appear in Appendix A of this document.

#### 1. **Establishing a Family Liaison**

Your fire department may choose to appoint a Family Liaison or even a Family Support Team. This position is responsible for assisting the family before, during and after the funeral service. The individual(s) taking on this responsibility should be identified in advance of the incident. The Chief of the Department should be the one to activate the person(s) as needed. This position could be filled by the Fire Department Chaplain, a command officer, or by a department member who knows the fallen firefighter's family well.

The Family Liaison performs as the single point of contact between the fire department and the fallen firefighter's family. The Family Liaison would serve in this capacity throughout the entire process.

## 2. Notifying Survivors

The fire department should establish a procedure for notification of a death and/or serious injury of a firefighter to immediate family members. Ideally a notification should be carried out by the Chief of the Department and the Family Liaison and if time permits, done in uniform. The notification to the family should happen as soon as possible.

The notification “team” should use more than one vehicle to travel to the family’s home. This allows one member, the Family Liaison, to remain with the family while the other member is free to leave to manage other aspects of the incident. It should be determined, in advance, who will speak for the department. A notification to the family should *ALWAYS* be done in person.

## 3. Notification to the Members of the Fire Department

Once the family of the fallen firefighter has been notified, then members of the department should learn of the incident before they hear about it from the media.

## 4. Notifying Others

There are frequently members of the community that need to be notified of a LODD after notification has been made to family and fire department members. Each fire department, together with their community leaders, needs to compile a list of individuals and the means of contact. This list would become a part of the preplan.

## 5. Working with the Media

The fire department should take steps to notify the family and members of the department *BEFORE* releasing information to the media. Ensure that the basic information to be given out is accurate and correct. To facilitate data accuracy, ensure that personal information for each member of the department is up to date.

Prepare a written statement from the Chief or the fire department’s Public Information Officer (PIO) to release only *AFTER* the family has been notified. Establish that *ONLY* authorized members be allowed to speak with the media.

## 6. Dealing with the Hospital

Should a critically injured firefighter be transported to the hospital, the fire department should have a plan in place to assist the family.

The fire department should offer to provide transportation for the family to the hospital. The Family Liaison, Chaplain or other designated department member should remain with the family to provide support. Transportation to the family’s home from the hospital should be provided and the Family Liaison, Chaplain or designated department member should remain with the family, unless they decline.

## **7. Assisting the Family Before and During the Funeral**

In planning the funeral service, it is imperative that the family's wishes come before those of the fire department. The fire department's Family Liaison or Chaplain may offer recommendations to the family for the department's participation in the service. The fire department should plan to send the Family Liaison or Chaplain with the family to assist in the funeral service planning, if the family so desires.

The fire department will need to plan on such possible needs as transporting the family to and from the mortuary and cemetery, child and pet care needs for the family, meals for the family, and management of household chores for the family, transporting out-of-town family members and guests and support to meet any other needs of the family.

## **8. Providing Benefit Information to the Family**

The fire department should maintain an up-to-date list of death benefits that may be available to survivors. Further, it is recommended that the fire department assign a Benefit Coordinator to the family to help with policy details. The Benefit Coordinator may call on the Family Liaison and/or Chaplain to complete these tasks.

## **9. Assisting the Family after the Funeral Service**

The fire department should maintain contact with the family and provide continued support. The family should be invited to department functions and be contacted by the Family Liaison or Chaplain to ensure that the link to the fire department "family" is not broken.

## II. Line of Duty Death – *Implementing the Pre-Plan*

### A. *Chief to Chief Network – a Check List*

The Chief of the Department plays a key role in the events surrounding a Line of Duty Death. So, where does a Chief turn for help? An organization exists that provides a Chief with support and information. That organization is called the *Chief to Chief Network*.

The Chief to Chief Network consists of Fire Chiefs who have lost firefighters and understand what a Chief and the department goes through in dealing with a LODD. Immediately after learning about a Line of Duty death, the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation gathers information about the incident and the department. They then arrange Chief-to-Chief contacts matching department size, career or volunteer status, and the nature of the incident. All exchanges between Chiefs are confidential.

The following is a brief check list to assist a Chief in managing a LODD. The check list is divided into three sections: *The First 24 Hours, Day Two through the Funeral*, and *After the Funeral*. Each item on the check list is described in detail in the following sections.

#### **The First 24 Hours**

##### **Notification**

- Assign a two person team to notify the fallen firefighter's family, in person, before releasing any information.
- Notify all on and off duty personnel, including the Fire Department Chaplain.
- Notify elected officials and other key people in the community of the death.
- Notify all other Fire Chiefs in the area/state.
- Notify the Public Safety Officers Benefits Program Office

##### **Family Support**

- Designate a Family Support Liaison (team) and offer to stay with the family around the clock.
- Designate a Hospital Liaison, if appropriate.
- Meet with the family to explain all the support options the fire department can provide.
- Collect the deceased firefighter's department assigned belongings to give to the family later. Inventory and document the items in the presence of a witness.

### **Department Support**

- Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation’s Chief to Chief Network, as needed, for assistance.
- Arrange for a Critical Incident Stress Defusing and/or Debriefing for the department. See Appendix C for contact numbers for CISM Teams in Colorado.

### **Dealing with the Incident**

- Determine the type of firefighter fatality investigation to conduct in addition to the NIOSH investigation (i.e., internal or external board of inquiry; arson, accident or homicide related).
- Contact the departmental or jurisdictional attorney regarding possible legal issues.

### **Dealing with the Community and Media**

- Prepare a summary of facts about the firefighter and the incident to use for public release of information.
- Prepare a written statement for the Chief or spokesperson to release to the media.
- Hold a briefing with the media.

## **Day Two through the Funeral**

### **Funeral/Memorial Service**

- Assist the family in planning the funeral as **THEY** choose.
- Continue to inform the department members of the details regarding the incident and the funeral/memorial service plans.
- Assign someone to oversee the plans for the fire department’s participation in the funeral service.

### **Family Support**

- Request local law enforcement to make routine checks on the family’s residence during the funeral and for several weeks afterward.
- Assist the family with transportation for out of town guests and family members; assist the family with meals, childcare, pet care, errands and home maintenance.

### **Department Support**

- Monitor department members closest to the incident and the fallen firefighter to see how they are dealing with the loss.

## **After the Funeral**

### **Family Support**

- Continue to invite the family to fire department events and activities.
- Provide assistance with routine tasks, i.e., home maintenance, snow removal, etc.
- The assigned Benefit Coordinator should continue to assist the family in accessing all benefits for which they are eligible.
- Offer to be with the family during special and difficult times and events, holidays, anniversaries, etc.

### **Department Support**

- Assist fire department members in accessing additional support needs.

### **Memorials and Tributes**

- Inform and include family members in local, state and national tributes to their fallen firefighter.
- Make the family aware of the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation and its support programs for fire service survivors.
- Plan to attend the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation's Memorial Weekend and to send an escort or Honor Guard unit for the family.

### **Department Issues/Planning**

- Update your Emergency Contact information for all department members
- Create or revise the department's Line of Duty Death plans/SOPs.

## **B. Chief to Chief Network – In Depth Steps**

### **1. Notification**

Notification to the family *MUST* be made in person and correctly. Family members have shared that how they were notified of the death had a great influence on the days, weeks, and months that came after the death of their loved-one. Understand that notifying a person that their loved-one is dead is a difficult task. Accept your own emotions as you support the family.

The following is a list of suggestions as to the best methods of making a LODD notification:

- Always make the notification in person, **NEVER** by telephone.
- Get to the survivors quickly; do not allow the media to inform them first.
- Use your preplan information sheet to contact the spouse, significant other or parents and siblings of the fallen firefighter.

- For family members outside your geographical area, arrange for local authorities to make the notification in person.
- Make the notification in a pair. This allows one person to accompany the survivors to the hospital, if needed, and one to remain behind with other family members. The recommended candidates for this very difficult detail include the Chief of the Department, the Fire Department Chaplain or the appointed Family Liaison.
- Take two vehicles, allowing one vehicle to be used to transport family to the hospital, one to remain at the family's home, or one to return to the scene or station to help the department.
- Before making a notification, verify the information you plan to release. Gather as much factual information as you can; survivors may have questions. If you do not know a fact, simply say so. Do not draw your own conclusions.
- Decide who will speak and what they will say before you arrive at a survivor's home. Introduce yourself and ask to speak to the family privately. Make sure you know WHO you are talking to.
- Begin the notification by saying, "*I have some very bad news to share*" or "*I am sorry to tell you this . . .*" Use the words, "*dead*" and "*died*" *NOT* "*passed away*" or "*gone*." Be very clear. Speak slowly. Get to the point.
- Answer questions as best as you can. If you do not know something, simply say so.
- Allow survivors to express emotion. ***DO NOT*** say things like, "*time heals all wounds*," "*I know how you feel*," "*he/she would have wanted to go this way*." These kinds of statements are harmful.
- Never leave immediately following a notification. Offer to call family members, friends or church associations. Make sure that when you leave, someone from the fire department is there, unless the family refuses.
- Provide the survivors with the opportunity to see the deceased firefighter. Offer transportation to the morgue or hospital. The Fire Department Chaplain or Family Liaison should accompany the survivors. Prepare the family for any disfigurement they may see. Transport the family home and offer the department's continued support and presence.
- Do not take the deceased fallen firefighter's personal items, including any department gear assigned to the fallen, as it takes many families some time before they can deal with these items.
- Write down all important information before you leave the family, like the Chief's contact numbers, the Chaplain's contact numbers, and the

Family Liaison's contact numbers. Leave this information in a prominent place in the family's home.

## **C. Family Support**

This section is divided into three parts: *Immediate, From Time of Death through Funeral*, and *Ongoing Support*. The information is designed to offer you suggestions on how to give support to your fallen firefighter's family during this very difficult time.

### **1. Immediate**

- Assign a member of the department to drive the family to the hospital and remain there as long as needed. This member may be the Family Liaison, Chaplain or simply a designated fire department member who will act as a driver for the family.
- The Family Liaison and/or Chaplain should work with hospital staff to find a private waiting room, if possible, where the family can gather.
- The Family Liaison and/or Chaplain should offer to help make telephone calls to relatives and close friends.
- The Family Liaison and/or Chaplain should discuss with the family, media issues and obtain the family's wishes relative to information to be released to the media. The family may want the department PIO to handle the media.
- In cases of extended hospitalization, the Family Liaison and/or Chaplain should assist the family with daily needs like child care and meals.
- Encourage the family to see the injured or deceased firefighter. If the firefighter is disfigured, prepare the family. Always allow the family to make the final decision on hospital/morgue visitation. Offer to accompany the family, should they wish to view the critically injured/deceased firefighter.
- Prepare the family for the possibility of an autopsy. Explain that an autopsy is a mandated portion of the investigation as to the death of the firefighter.
- Have someone available to drive the family home and offer continued visits or even staying with the family if they wish.

### **2. From Time of Death through Funeral**

- Notify the U. S. Department of Justice of the death. Contact numbers are 1-800-421-6770 or 202-307-1480. This call will begin the process of reviewing eligibility for the fallen to qualify for Public Safety Officers Benefits Program benefits, if applicable.

- Contact the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation about the death. This call will begin extensive family and department support. National FFF's telephone number is 301-447-1365.
- Contact the Colorado Fallen Firefighters Foundation about the death. This call may provide additional, local resources. The main organization number is 303-331-2121. The foundation has a web site at [www.coff.us](http://www.coff.us). ***However, for an immediate response, 24 by 7, please contact Chaplain Condé Bliven at 303-838-2220.***
- Work with the family in planning the funeral service. The wishes of the family **ALWAYS** come first. If the family wishes a private funeral, the department may ask permission to hold a memorial service.
- If the family wishes a fire service funeral, secure a Class A uniform for the deceased. Lighthouse Uniform Company will supply a uniform at no cost to the department. Their telephone number is 1-800-426-5225.
- Offer to pick up arriving family members at the airport and assist with their lodging.
- Offer to have a member of the fire department stay with the family prior to the funeral. Consider a department member rotation schedule to accommodate this request.
- Have a member available to drive the family to the funeral home, run errands, or answer the telephone at the family's home.
- Help to coordinate food, child care and pet care or maintenance like clearing snow.
- If donations are collected, set up a bank account to deposit these funds.
- Coordinate with law enforcement to make routine checks of the family's residence.
- Assign a department member to help the family set guidelines for dialog with the media.
- Assign a person to house sit during the funeral service.

### **3. Ongoing Support**

- Continue to invite the family to department events.
- Continue to talk to the family about your memories of the firefighter.
- Remember special events like holidays and the anniversary of the death. Families need additional support during these times.
- Contact the family before releasing any information on investigations, incident reports, etc.
- Consider, as a department, creating a tribute to the fallen firefighter. This could be a memorial, a scrapbook, or a scholarship fund.

- Provide the family with information on the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Encourage the family to attend the national tribute to the fallen each October, as well as state and local memorial activities. The fire department should have delegates attend these activities as much as possible.

#### **D. Department Support**

It is highly recommended that in the case of a LODD, the fire department contact a Critical Incident Stress Management Team as **SOON AS POSSIBLE**. CISM team members are highly trained and skilled at helping emergency services people handle extremely stressful situations. In Appendix C, you will find a list of CISM Teams throughout Colorado. Simply contact a team closest to your location.

For the greatest effectiveness and support for the department members, you will want to request that a CISM Team visit your department to do a “*defusing*” in the first few hours after the LODD incident. That team will return within 24 to 48 hours to do a full “*debriefing*” (CISD – Critical Incident Stress Debriefing).

The National Fallen Firefighters Foundation has assembled a network of Chiefs who have lost firefighters and understand what a Chief and fire department go through as a result of that loss. When tragedy strikes, one of the Network Chiefs can contact the Chief who just lost a firefighter. The value of this contact is that the Chief who previously lost a firefighter can lend professional and personal support based on their actual experience. Chief to Chief conversations may include information on incident follow-up and investigation issues; suggestions on how to support the fallen firefighter’s family and coworkers; funeral/memorial service protocols; dealing with requests for information; benefits; as well as managing personal feelings of loss. All exchanges among Chiefs are confidential. To contact the Chief to Chief Network, call the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation at 301-447-1365 or their web site at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org).

As mentioned earlier, CISD is a very valuable resource for your department following a LODD incident. However, some department members and extended family may need additional assistance beyond CISD. The following chart shows the differences between Grief Counseling and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing. The basic difference is the scope of the two approaches. The following chart, plus the Signs of Grief chart, following, may help you to determine the best method of assistance for your department members

## Grief vs. CISD

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Grief Counseling . . .</b></p> <p><i>Helps the survivor . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• actualize the loss</li> <li>• identify and express feelings</li> <li>• live without the deceased</li> <li>• withdraw emotionally from the deceased</li> </ul> <p><i>It is designed to . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• provide support and understanding of normal grief behaviors</li> <li>• provide ongoing support</li> <li>• increase coping skills</li> <li>• occur individually, in groups or by family</li> </ul> <p>Counseling may be ongoing and provides more individualized attention than a group debriefing.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Critical Incident Stress Debriefing</b></p> <p><i>Assists fire service personnel to construct a shared picture of . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how the incident occurred</li> <li>• what each of them was thinking</li> <li>• what each of them was doing</li> <li>• how each individual is reacting and feeling</li> <li>• how the department is reacting</li> </ul> <p><i>It is designed to assist firefighters and the department take concrete steps to . . .</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• begin the recovery process</li> <li>• learn from the experience</li> <li>• honor its lost member(s)</li> <li>• rebound from challenging events</li> <li>• collectively move forward</li> </ul> <p>CISD sessions usually occur once or twice. CISD sessions are not “therapy.”</p>
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Grief can affect many aspects of a person’s life. The following are typical signs of grief. These signs indicate that a person may need extra support in dealing with their grief. Should symptoms remain for a long period or worsen, additional assistance may be sought out.

## Signs of Grief

<b>Emotional Signs</b>		<b>Behavioral Signs</b>
sadness	anxiety	social withdrawal
helplessness	shock	crying and sighing
relief	anger	searching and calling out
loneliness	freedom	absentmindedness
guilt	fatigue	sleep and appetite disturbance
yearning	numbness	avoiding reminders of the deceased
		dreaming of the deceased
		carrying objects belonging to the deceased
		wearing clothes belonging to the deceased

<b>Cognitive Signs</b>	<b>Physical Signs</b>
disbelief confusion preoccupation hallucinations denial a sense of presence of the deceased	hollow stomach tightness of chest dry mouth breathlessness lack of energy feeling of panic muscle weakness depersonalization over-sensitivity to noise

### **E. The Funeral**

This section will address issues relating to the viewing and/or visitation, the funeral/memorial service, the procession and the graveside service, as well as a post graveside service reception. Decisions concerning all of these areas belong to the family, but the department may be asked to participate.

Planning a large and complex service requires the coordination of many individuals. The Chief of the Department may choose to appoint main coordinators, like a *Viewing/Visitation Coordinator* a *Funeral Coordinator* and a *Cemetery Coordinator*. These individuals can see to any and all details in their area. The Chief should call daily meetings of the main coordinators, the Chaplain, the Family Liaison, any clergy the family may have, and the Honor Guard Commander to discuss how the various elements of the service are progressing.

The Chief, the Funeral Coordinator, the Cemetery Coordinator and the department officers may want to consider a “walk through” the day before a large funeral. This will enable the various sections to practice things like marching, saluting, where to stand, casket handling, where to sit, ringing of the bell, etc.

#### **First Steps – Getting Ready**

- Lower all flags to half staff from the time the death is announced until 24 hours after the service *or* one week following the death.
- All members will wear a black band, positioned horizontally, over their badges from the time of death until 24 hours after the funeral *or* one week after the death. This band can be worn for as long as 30 days after the funeral, as well. Suppliers like Our Designs will overnight mourning bands for the cost of shipping.
- Departments may choose to bunt their building(s). The easiest way to obtain bunting is to purchase a bolt of black cotton fabric and drape the material using rubber bands, staples or any other means to affix the

material to the building. Bunting traditionally hangs under windows and over doors. Bunting remains in place up to the same period as flags remain at half staff.

- Arrange for an Honor Guard to stand for the viewing, at the pleasure of the family. This detail may require the commitment of a team of members to accomplish. Please see the Viewing/Visitation section for more detail.
- Arrange for Pallbearers, if the family wishes. You will need six to eight Pallbearers. Depending on where the service is held, you may also need a number of Ushers. Often the family will have Pallbearers or Ushers of their own or will want to blend family, friends and fire department members to carry out these tasks. It is the family's option to choose. Speak to the funeral home about using a "church cart" to move the casket, rather than actually trying to carry the casket.
- Arrange for all necessary equipment to be used in the processional, to be cleaned. The Chief will designate a department apparatus to be used to transport the casket if the family wishes. This apparatus is to be bunted in black and purple and be appropriately prepared with flowers.
- Arrange for a formal Honor Guard for the funeral service, if the family wishes. If your fire department does not have a formal Honor Guard, other departments do. Ask your neighboring fire departments if they can help.
- Arrange for a Color Guard to participate in the processional. As with the Honor Guard, if your department does not have a Color Guard, simply ask your neighboring departments for assistance.
- Arrange for a Pipe and Drum Band if the family requests one. A good source to obtain the services of a Pipe and Drum Band is the Colorado Emerald Society. They can be reached at 303-674-7695 for further information.
- Arrange for a Bugler should the family wish Taps to be played. Your local VFW or American Legion posts may be a good source to obtain a bugler.
- Ensure that all active firefighters have Class A uniforms to wear. This includes long-sleeved shirts, ties, white gloves and a mourning band for their badge (*and, dress uniform hats for some departments*). If true mourning bands are not available, then black electrical tape can be used in a pinch.
- The department should prepare a map of the areas involved to facilitate the proceedings and assist members, out of town guests, and others to locate the various venues. Survey the area and make provisions for all attending units and personnel. The map should show location of the Fire Department, Funeral Home, Church and Cemetery, as needed. It should show the location of assembly area, parking areas, staging area for department apparatus, as well as visiting department apparatus and location of the gravesite in the cemetery.

- Make arrangements with your local police department to assist with handling traffic and parking, for escorting the procession and handling traffic and parking at the cemetery.
- Contact the media to identify the location they are to function from, whether there will be a “*pool feed*” or individual cameras for TV outlets, and some basic ground rules on tactful photographic coverage.
- Consider asking your Auxiliary or another fire department’s Auxiliary to help with a reception following the graveside service.

## **Viewing and Visitation**

- Determine if the family wishes viewing (open casket) or visitation (closed casket). In the case of severe injury to the fallen firefighter, viewing (other than the family) may not be possible. Times and dates for viewing/visitation are determined by the family.
- An Honor Guard may be posted during visiting hours if the family desires. The Honor Guard consists of two or more individuals who rotate their post every 10 to 15 minutes. The dress for this activity is full Class A uniforms. If there is only one guard available, that person stands at the head of the coffin. If there are two guards, one stands at the head and the other at the foot of the coffin. The guard(s) stands at attention during this time.
- The family may ask the Honor Guard to step down so they can have some private time. At this time, the guard(s) can stand just outside the door, at attention, until they are permitted to return to their post(s) by the fallen.
- Catholic protocols may include a Rosary Service along with the viewing. Coordinate this activity with the officiating Priest. Normally the Honor Guard would post at the head of the casket. If this is not allowed by Priest or family, the guard should then post at the main entrance to the funeral home or church. Should the body need to be moved to the church for the Rosary Service, the Honor Guard should accompany it and the immediate family to the church.

## **Funeral/Memorial Service Considerations**

- The scheduled date for the service must accommodate the needs of the family, facility to be used for the service, clergy, funeral home, cemetery, the medical examiner and the fire department.
- Coordinators and leaders must remain aware that any other events planned at the facility slated for the funeral or in the community may cause logistical challenges.
- Scheduling the service start time is critical. People must be allowed enough time to arrive at their assigned destination. Many fire departments will travel long distances, with apparatus, to honor your fallen firefighter. Many guests will also travel long distances. Allow enough time for their arrival.

- Be aware that a service that starts at 10:00 a.m. starts for the department, and especially for those traveling, around 7:00 a.m. Take into consideration all the preparation and coordination that must be accomplished.
- It is imperative that you schedule the service to miss the morning and evening commute.
- Locating a facility that will hold large numbers of people can be a challenge. You may want to explore large local facilities, like gymnasiums and civic centers. The use of alternative facilities creates additional planning challenges, such as sound systems, visibility, chairs, etc. You may wish to negotiate with these facilities, in advance, to ensure that they are viable choices in the event you must manage a LODD.
- If a large facility cannot be found, then overflow seating must be considered. If visibility or hearing is a problem, you will need to consider additional audio coverage of the service. If overflow seating is not available and people must stand through the service, consideration should be given to providing water and portable restroom facilities.

### **Seating Arrangements**

- The Coordinators will need to prepare a seating plan to accommodate the needs of the family, department members, dignitaries, visiting departments and the public.
- Normally, if Ushers are used, they should be assigned to the rear of each aisle and given specific instructions on how to facilitate the seating plan.
- Attendees seeking a good seat may arrive an hour or more before the service is scheduled to start. Be prepared to handle their arrival.
- If you have a facility without adequate seating, the family, their friends, the department and the dignitaries' needs are met first. All others can stand through the service.
- A room should be provided to gather family members, department leaders and Coordinators before the start of services.

### **Religious Service, Protocols and Speakers**

- Religious services take precedence over fire service functions. Planners should meet with the family and the officiating Clergy to determine and define the extent of the department's involvement.
- Some Clergy members may be inflexible regarding fire department protocols. In such cases it is imperative to have a clear understanding of the family's wishes.
- In some faiths or denominations, the only fire department involvement will be as an Honor Guard.
- Certain fire service traditions may have to be performed at graveside rather than at the church.

- When the family requests a private service, the department may request a memorial service. It would, of course, be held on a separate day.
- The order of speakers should be assigned from the highest ranking speaker to the lowest. These speakers are usually followed by eulogies from family members and department members. The number of speakers and musical selections will determine how much time is allotted to each speaker. A good rule of thumb is 10 minutes each.
- Musical selections can serve as a good transition for the Honor Guard to rotate. The Honor Guard members should change out every 15 to 20 minutes.
- Specific instructions should be given to attendees about the conclusion of the service. An example would be, instructions given to any visiting fire departments about having their apparatus started for the procession to the cemetery.
- It is preferable to have a Chaplain or a Clergy person who is familiar with fire service traditions do the service. They can also serve in an advisory capacity for other Clergy.
- The service should last approximately one and one-half hours.

## **Processions**

- Processions and motorcades are desirable, but not required. Consideration should be given to the length of time it takes to get the procession to its destination safely. Processions should be well planned with as little impact to the public as possible.
- A pre-service motorcade may be used to coordinate the arrival of apparatus from visiting departments, as well as if there will be a graveside service. Your department may want to limit the procession to family members, the department and/or visiting fire department apparatus.
- Advise allied agencies if their respective jurisdictions will be impacted by the service or procession.
- Consider delegating parking and traffic control responsibilities to police agencies what have jurisdiction.
- Public Works agencies should be contacted to determine if the intended routes will be free of hazards and closures.

### **Procession Suggestions – Walking (*used for a LODD only*)**

- Pipe & Drum Band
- Color Guard
- Chaplain/Clergy
- Funeral Coach and/or Department Apparatus with Pallbearers
- Family

- Chief(s)
- Department Officers
- All Uniformed Department Personnel

### **Driven Procession**

- Police Escort
- Funeral Coach and/or Department Apparatus with Honor Guard & Pallbearers
- Family Car(s)
- Line of Duty Department Apparatus
- Visiting Department Apparatus
- Tail End Police Vehicle(s)

### **Graveside Service**

- The graveside service normally consists of a short (15 minute) religious service and a few fire service traditions.
- The arrival at the cemetery is very difficult for the family.
- Most cemeteries do not provide sound systems. This makes it difficult for the attendees to hear what is being said. The department should obtain a sound system or ask if the funeral home can provide one.
- If the procession is long and the family, or at least not the entire family, is not included, the department and/or church will need to provide a family waiting room. As the procession nears arrival at the cemetery, this portion of the family can be brought to the cemetery, as well.
- The graveside service is frequently where military organizations make their presentations. If the fallen firefighter was a veteran, the VFW or American Legion can provide a flag for the coffin, which will subsequently be the one presented to the family.
- If the family wishes to have a flag ceremony and the firefighter was not a veteran, many protocols suggest using a state or department flag. Some protocols allow the use of an American flag, however if the fallen was not a veteran, the department must purchase the flag. In this instance, the funeral home is a source for the flag. Instructions on how to fold the flag are listed in the Appendix section of this document.
- Fire Service traditions, such as the ringing of the bell and “Last Call” or a reading of “The Firefighter’s Prayer” may be used at graveside. You will find copies of these in the Appendix section of this document.

### **Reception**

- It is recommended to have a reception at the end of the graveside service.
- The length of time for the reception should not be more than two hours.

- Arrange for an adequate space near graveside or the facility used for the service for the reception. Remember, parking fire apparatus will eat up a lot of parking space.
- Consider asking the department's Auxiliary or a neighboring department's Auxiliary to help with the reception.
- Whenever possible, a map to the reception should be published in the service bulletin or provided at the service.

### **Media Participation**

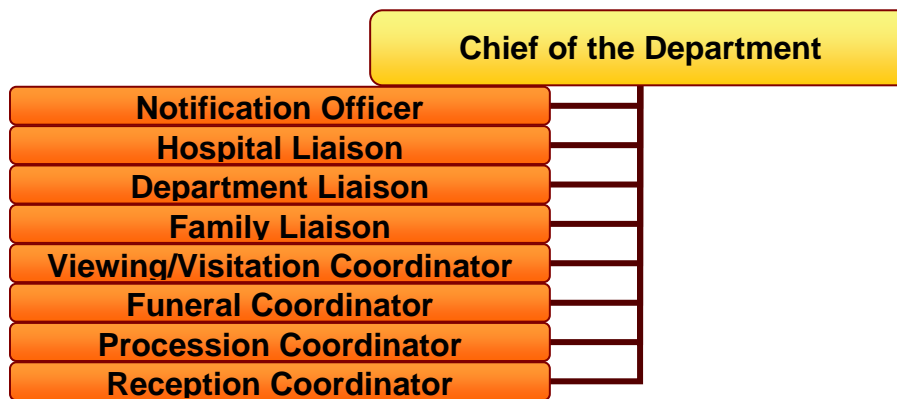
- The department PIO should discuss media participation with the family. If the family agrees to their participation, the PIO should make specific arrangements to accommodate the media needs, as well as adamantly respecting the family's privacy.

## Appendix A

### ***Job Descriptions for Liaisons & Coordinators***

Depending on the size and scope of the funeral, the Chief may wish to delegate specific tasks to Liaisons and/or Coordinators. Liaisons and/or Coordinators would manage details relating to specific areas. The following organizational chart shows the reporting relationship of the various positions to the Chief of the Department. Additionally, the following job descriptions describe the responsibilities of the various Liaison(s) and/or Coordinator(s) positions you may wish to consider:

#### **Organizational Chart**



*Note: a department member may hold more than one of these positions. The Chief may choose to organize the chain of command as best suits the needs of his or her department.*

**Notification Officer:** This position, or positions, accompanies the Chief of the Department to the family for notification of the serious injury and/or death of a fellow firefighter. The individual(s) should plan to remain with the family to assist with any needs they may have, like possibly driving them to the hospital. The Notification Officer remaining with the family provides the Chief with the choice of remaining with the family, returning to the scene, or simply to leave the family's home to manage the needs of the department. The Notification Officer can help to shield the family from having to interact with too many well-meaning visitors during the first few hours.

**Hospital Liaison:** This individual is the department's representative and supports the family at the hospital. The Hospital Liaison should attempt to find a private area where the family may wait. The Hospital Liaison should accompany the family as support, but not interfere as the family visits the critically injured/deceased firefighter. The Hospital Liaison should remain with the family until the family leaves the hospital.

The Hospital Liaison should ensure that all of the firefighter's gear and personal belongings are gathered from the emergency room. The family will decide if they wish to take these items home when they leave the hospital. Some items may need to be

withheld from the family for investigative purposes. Other items, such as bloodstained turnout gear, may not be appropriate to release to the family.

It is the Hospital Liaison's responsibility to protect the family from the media. The Hospital Liaison may wish to locate the media in a safe location, out of the way of the emergency department entrance and/or away from direct access to the family. The Hospital Liaison should explain, to the media, that the Chief or Public Information Officer (PIO) will make a statement later. Under no circumstances, should the Hospital Liaison make any statements or offer an opinion to a member of the media.

**Department Liaison:** This individual, in coordination with the Chief and other Liaisons/Coordinators, helps to keep the department membership informed as to the many activities that face them in the days immediately following the death of a fellow firefighter. The Department Liaison will commute times of viewing/visitation, service times, and all other pertinent information. The Funeral Liaison may utilize the Department Liaison to communicate dress for the day, rehearsal times, location of events, bunting times and much more.

Many fire departments have a Public Information Officer. Because the PIO is well informed about so many issues and details, they make an excellent choice to be designated Department Liaison during these difficult times. All announcements made and information passed by the Department Liaison should be approved by the Chief.

**Family Liaison:** The Family Liaison is probably the most intense and time demanding job in this process. This individual must ensure that the family's needs are being met. The Family Liaison must be in constant communication with the Chief and other Liaisons and/or Coordinators as to what the needs of the family are and how the various Sections can help. The Family Liaison must be ready to accompany the family, when requested, to assist them at the funeral home, the cemetery, or other location(s). The Family Liaison is on call 24 hours a day until long after the funeral is over. This position is best filled by the Fire Department Chaplain or someone on the department who knows the family well. In some cases, the Family Liaison can also perform as the Hospital Liaison.

**Viewing/Visitation Coordinator:** Should you face a large funeral and a long viewing/visitation period and the family has requested the fire department provide an Honor Guard for the coffin, you may wish to consider identifying a member to act as the Viewing/Visitation Coordinator. The times for a firefighter standing their post are short, generally 10 to 15 minutes per shift. With that in mind, you will need at least one additional firefighter to take the next shift (more is better). The Viewing/Visitation Coordinator can enlist volunteers for this Honor Guard duty and create a shift schedule to cover the various shifts. It is a long and detailed process, but should you need to provide an Honor Guard at the viewing, a helpful one.

**Funeral Coordinator:** This individual has a tremendous responsibility. The Chief may assign varied tasks to the Funeral Coordinator such as making sure that all department flags are lowered to half staff and raised again to full staff at the appropriate times. Other assigned tasks might include ensuring that fire department buildings are

bunted, as well as preparing any apparatus to be used to carry the fallen firefighter. The Funeral Coordinator will notify the membership of the uniform of the day. They will acquire the black mourning bands for badges, or provide black tape, and they will order the Class A uniform for the fallen firefighter.

Should the department decide against a Viewing/Visitation Coordinator position, the Funeral Coordinator should handle those duties to meet the family's requests.

The Funeral Coordinator should coordinate any walk-throughs or rehearsals of department personnel. Further, they should coach Pall Bearers and Ushers so those individuals feel comfortable doing their jobs. The Funeral Coordinator is responsible for charting the seating arrangements at the funeral and should provide map locations of the funeral home, or other location of service, as well as the cemetery and grave location. This information should be provided to the Procession Coordinator or whoever is in charge of that aspect of the service.

Should the family wish a flag presentation; the funeral home will provide an American flag only if the deceased firefighter was a military veteran. If the fallen firefighter was not a military veteran, the Funeral Coordinator must acquire (purchase) one. Some protocols require state or department flags be used for non-veterans. Other protocols do not specify. The Funeral Coordinator must ensure that the department members responsible for folding the flag do so properly. Directions for folding the flag are included in Appendix G of this document.

The Funeral Coordinator may be asked to contact a Pipe Band, an Honor Guard, or a Bugler for the ceremony, according to the family's wishes. Information on how to contact these resources is also listed in Appendix B of this document.

**Procession Coordinator:** Once the decision has been made to have an apparatus (fire apparatus, ambulances, police vehicles, other authorized vehicles) procession, and who exactly will be in it, the Procession Coordinator would be responsible to take the funeral service location, cemetery location, and grave location (as provided by the Funeral Coordinator) and map out a route. Frequently, the department will want the route to include passing by the fallen firefighter's home station. The Procession Coordinator will plan staging any vehicles to be part of the procession, as well as a police escort and route. Directions should be made available to all participating fire departments. If a reception is planned after the graveside service, directions to that location will need to be included, as well.

**Reception Coordinator:** The fire department and family may wish to have a reception following the graveside service. If the department has an Auxiliary, they may want to ask them to coordinate this section. If not, the department may request that an Auxiliary from a neighboring department organize the reception.

## Appendix B

### ***LODD Resources for Fire Departments***

#### **Autopsy Guide**

***Firefighter Autopsy Protocol***, United States Fire Administration, 1991

Available online at [www.usfa.fema.gov/pdf/usfapubs/fa-156.pdf](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/pdf/usfapubs/fa-156.pdf)

Contact: US Fire Administration at [www.usfa.fema.gov](http://www.usfa.fema.gov)

USFA Publications Center, 16825 S. Seton Ave, Emmetsburg, MD 21727

1-800-561-3356

#### **Benefits**

***Public Safety Officers' Benefits Program Fact Sheet and Public Safety Officers' Educational Assistance Program***

Available online at [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bja/html/benefit1.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bja/html/benefit1.htm)

***National Fallen Firefighters Foundation, State Benefits***

Available online at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)

See State Benefits section

#### **Funeral Guides**

***Final Farewell to a Fallen Firefighter: A Basic Fire Department Funeral Protocol***, Fire Engineering Magazine, 1993

Contact: Fire Engineering Magazine

E-Mail: [williamm@pennwell.com](mailto:williamm@pennwell.com) for reprint

Park 80 West, Plaza Two, 7<sup>th</sup> Floor, Saddle Brook, NJ 07663

201-845-800 Fax: 201-845-6275

***Funeral Procedures for Firefighters***, National Volunteer Fire Council, 1991

Contact: NVFC at [www.nvfc.org/manuals-html](http://www.nvfc.org/manuals-html)

1050 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 490, Washington, DC 20036

202-887-5700/1-888-ASK-NVFC Fax: 202-887-5291

***IAFF Recommended Protocol for Line of Duty Deaths***. The IAFF will provide this protocol at the request of the IAFF District Vice President or local IAFF affiliates.

Contact: IAFF at [www.iaff.org](http://www.iaff.org)

1750 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20006

202-737-8484 Fax: 202-737-8418

***A Procedural Guide in the Event of Death in the Line of Duty of a Member of the Volunteer Fire Service***, National Volunteer Fire Council, 1987

Contact: NVFC at [www.nvfc.org/manuals-html](http://www.nvfc.org/manuals-html)

1051 17<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 490, Washington, DC 20036

202-887-5700/1-888-ASK-NVFC Fax: 202-887-5291

## **Investigations**

***Guide for Investigation of a Line of Duty Death, International Association of Fire Chiefs***

Contact: IAFC at [www.ichiefs.org/departments/pubs.htm#lod](http://www.ichiefs.org/departments/pubs.htm#lod)

E-mail: [publications@iafc.org](mailto:publications@iafc.org)

4025 Fair Ridge Drive, Fairfax, VA 22033-2868

703-273-0911

***NIOSH Firefighter Fatality Programs and Reports***

*Firefighter Fatality Investigation Program*

Contact: NIOSH at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/implweb.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/implweb.html)

1-800-35-NIOSH or 1-800356-4674

*Firefighter Fatality Reports*

A list of and links to all the periodic NIOSH reports on firefighter fatalities are available online at [www.cdc.gov/niosh/facerpts.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/facerpts.html)

## **Pre-Incident Planning**

***A Guide to Help the Fire Service Prepare for a Line of Duty Death***, Paul J. Antonellis, Jr. 1995

Contact: Order online at [www.fire-police-ems.com/books/bg9500.htm](http://www.fire-police-ems.com/books/bg9500.htm)

E-mail: [fsp@ma.ultranet.com](mailto:fsp@ma.ultranet.com)

FPS Books and Videos, 577 Main Street, Hudson, MA 01749

1-800-522-8528 or 978-562-1289 Fax: 978-562-3554

## **Specialized Web Sites**

***Colorado Fallen Firefighters Foundation***, you're local resource in dealing with Line of Duty Deaths.

Contact: Online at <http://www.coff.us/index.htm>

P. O. Box 470097

Aurora, CO 80047-0097

303-331-2121

***National Fallen Firefighters Foundation***

Contact: Online at [www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)

Provides immediate information on how to report a Line of Duty Death and on support for survivors, as well as criteria for inclusion on the National Memorial. Gives information on the national tribute held each October. Provides pre-incident planning resources to download and adapt to local needs, as well as a clearing house listing Honor Guard. Lists survivor benefits for each state.

***Firehouse.com***

Contact: Online at [www.firehouse.com](http://www.firehouse.com)

Provides immediate information on incidents and hosts a forum on Line of Duty Death issues.

***United States Fire Administration***

Contact: Online at [www.usfa.fema.gov/ffmem](http://www.usfa.fema.gov/ffmem)

Provides listing of firefighter deaths. The current year listings reflect only the information USFA has received and do not indicate that a Line of Duty Death will meet criteria for inclusion on the National Memorial.

## Appendix C

### ***Colorado CISM Team Network Dispatch Numbers***

<b>Team</b>	<b>Base Location</b>	<b>Dispatch Number</b>
Mayflower	Denver	303-788-6889
Centennial	Greeley	970-356-1212
Two Rivers	Ft. Collins	970-498-7995, pgr 8021
Southern Colorado	Colorado Springs	719-576-1200
Front Range	Longmont	303-651-8501
High Country	Breckenridge	970-668-8600
Timberline	Steamboat Springs	970-870-1240
San Luis Valley Critical Incident Team	Alamosa	719-589-5807
Triad Debriefing Team	Glenwood Springs	970-928-3532
High Plains CISM Team	Yuma	970-848-0464
Turning Point*	Ft. Collins	970-221-1488 #1008
Fremont County CISM Team	Canon City	719-276-5600
Teller County CISM Team	Woodland Park	719-687-9262

#### Hospital Team

To access the Colorado CISM Network web page, go to [www.healthONEems.com](http://www.healthONEems.com) and click on Critical Incident Stress Management.

## Appendix D

### ***A Firefighter's Prayer (Traditional Version)***

When I am called to duty, God,  
Whenever flames may rage  
Give me strength to save a life  
Whatever is 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  
And quickly and efficiently  
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  
While on duty I must answer death's call  
Bless with Your protecting hand  
My family one and all.

-- *Anonymous*

### ***Firefighter's Prayer (IAFF Version)***

When I am called to duty, God wherever flames may rage,  
give me strength to save a life, whatever be its age.

Help me to embrace a little child before it's too late,  
or save an older person from the horror of that fate.

Enable me to be alert to hear 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 neighbor and protect his property.

And if according to your will I have to lose my life,  
bless with your protecting hand my loving family from strife.

## Appendix E

### ***Tolling of the Bell – a Short History***

Long before the Internet was invented, or telephones and radios were used across our great nation, fire departments used the telegraph to communicate, using special codes to receive fire alarms from those once-familiar red fire alarm boxes which stood on practically every street corner.

When a firefighter was killed, or in the language of the military and public safety, “*fell in the line of duty*,” the fire alarm office would tap out a special signal. This signal would be tapped out as **five measured dashes; then a pause; then five measured dashes; then a pause; then five measured dashes.**

This came to be called the ***Tolling of the Bell*** and was broadcast over the telegraph fire alarm circuits to all station houses in the vicinity. Heard outside on the streets, with fire department's windows open, the resonating echo was similar to that of the fire stations of old where fire alarm gongs sounded the locations of thousands of emergencies throughout the history of this growing country.

This was done for the purpose of notification, and as a sign of honor and respect for all firefighters who had made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their communities. Such symbolism has been a time-honored fire service tradition and is repeated at each service of a fallen firefighter.

## Appendix F

The following has been used by fire departments around Colorado in funerals for their fallen firefighters. It is easy to change the text to fit local protocol.

### ***The Last Call***

- *(Spoken by the Chief using a hand-held radio) “Dispatch . . . (Fire Department Name) Command -- Please try to reach -- (fallen firefighter’s radio number or name)”*
- **“Dispatch Copies . . . Stand-by”**
- *“Fallen’s radio number, fallen’s radio number – Dispatch” (PAUSE, NO RESPONSE)*
- *“Fallen’s radio number, fallen’s radio number – Dispatch” (PAUSE, NO RESPONSE)*
- *“Your Fire Department Name . . . stand by for tones”(All Members should set their radios and/or Minitors to receive page)*  
*DISPATCHER SETS OFF TONES*  
*DISPATCHER THEN READS . . .*
- **What a loss to us the Almighty has claimed, a Firefighter, a friend, (your fallen’s name inserted) was his or her name (insert the appropriate gender throughout).**
- **Once he strode proudly along the street, with a smile on his face for all he would meet.**
- **“Good morning” or “Good evening” he would say, “Hope things are fine” and “Have a good day.”**
- **Off he would go, doing his daily tasks, taking care of duty, no questions asked.**
- **Concerned with public service day after day, keeping everyone secure and out of harms way.**
- **With a badge on his chest, wearing it with pride, and a heart of pure gold beating inside.**
- *(Insert your fallen’s name) job was pleasant at times and occasionally bad. Sometimes things happened that made him sad.*
- **Yet he went on without letting it show on his face, making life better for the human race.**
- **An unselfish man, (insert your fallen’s name) gave his best to us all. He shared our problems, going beyond duties’ call.**
- **He took others’ troubles as if they were his own, and to most of us, this was never known.**

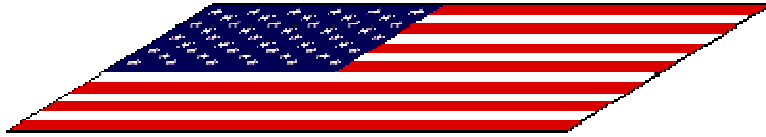
- **He was an inspiration to us all, an example to kids. Did you ever stop to thank him for the job that he did?**
- ***(Insert your fallen's name)* has answered his last call. He has gone home to the Father, a great loss to us all.**
- **All units are advised . . . *(Insert your fallen's name or radio number)* is Out of Service and Back in Quarters forever more.**
- **Dispatch is Clear**

## Appendix G

### *How to fold the American Flag*

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#### Step 1



To properly fold the Flag, begin by holding it waist-high with another person so that its surface is parallel to the ground.

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#### Step 2



Fold the lower half of the stripe section lengthwise over the field of stars, holding the bottom and top edges securely.

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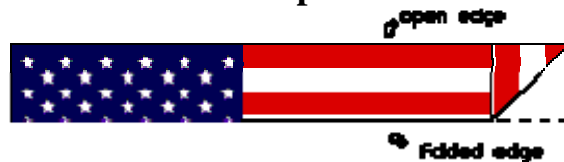
#### Step 3



Fold the flag again lengthwise with the blue field on the outside.

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#### Step 4



Make a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to meet the open (top) edge of the flag.

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**Step 5**



Turn the outer (end) point inward, parallel to the open edge, to form a second triangle.

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**Step 6**



The triangular folding is continued until the entire length of the flag is folded in this manner.

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**Step 7**



When the flag is completely folded, only a triangular blue field of stars should be visible.



## Appendix H

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3. Colorado Emerald Society  
P. O. Box 48211, Denver, CO 80204  
Pipe Major Scott Hughes 303-674-7695  
or E-mail at [piper3893@msn.com](mailto:piper3893@msn.com)
4. Corpus Christy Fire Department, Corpus Christy, TX  
*Line of Duty Death or Serious Injury Notification*
5. Dixon Fire Department, Dixon, IL  
*Taking Care of Our Own*
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