



**ORANGE COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
GENERAL ORDER
DEATH/SERIOUS INJURY NOTIFICATIONS**



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To: All Deputy Sheriffs & Office Personnel
 From: Sheriff Carl E. DuBois
 Subject: General Order - Death/Serious Injury Notifications

PURPOSE: The purpose of this General Order is to establish procedures for notifying next of kin of deceased, seriously injured or seriously ill persons.

I. GENERAL PREPARATION:

- A. As certain pertinent facts and details concerning the deceased. The Deputy shall record the full name, age, sex, race, home address, location of death/serious injury/serious illness, cause of death/serious injury/serious illness, time of death/serious injury/serious illness, location of the body/serious injury/serious illness, and any other pertinent details surrounding the death/serious injury/serious illness. Verify that the information is correct and learn as much as possible regarding the circumstances of the death.
- B. It is important that the Deputy be permitted inside the house before actual notification is made. A death notification conveys very personal and private information that should not be initially shared by others, nor should the survivor's need for personal privacy be compromised at this traumatic moment. Additionally, if notification is completed at the door, officers may not be able to gain admission thereafter. In this event, should the survivor suffer serious medical or psychological problems, the officers would be unable to assist.

II. PERSONAL NOTIFICATIONS:

- A. Notifying the next of kin of a death, serious injury or serious illness can place the Deputy in a delicate and uncomfortable situation. The following procedure should be used whenever possible and practical.
 - 1. Notification should be made as promptly as possible and notification shall whenever possible be made by two (2) Sheriff's Office Personnel.
 - 2. Notification must, if at all possible, be made in person, not over the telephone.
 - 3. The presence of a minister, relative, close friend, or neighbor should be obtained whenever possible before notification or, if unable to obtain before notification, Deputies should attempt to notify any of the above immediately after notification and should remain with next of kin until friends or relatives arrive, whenever possible.
 - 4. If notification is made to the next of kin who is alone, the Deputy should

offer to assist the next of kin in contacting a relative, friend, hospital, doctor, etc. and Deputies should remain with next of kin until further assistance arrives.

5. The Deputy must be as tactful and diplomatic as possible. Express sympathy and a desire to assist the next of kin. The Deputy shall proceed directly with the notification, speaking in a slow, calm manner and proceed until completed.
6. Details regarding the cause of death, particularly in cases of violence, accidents or murder, should not be discussed at this time. Using such words as decapitated or killed detracts from a competent and compassionate notification and are best left to a physician or medical examiner to discuss with the survivor at a later time. Being too graphic at this stage can create an emotional overload which can complicate an already difficult situation.
7. If necessary, assist the next of kin by providing or arranging transportation to the hospital.

III. REQUESTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES:

- A. When an emergency message is requested by another agency to make notification the dispatcher or desk officer should obtain whatever pertinent information about the situation that is available to assist the relative in receiving the message. Prior to making the notification, the information must be authenticated.
- B. The dispatcher or desk officer must obtain the caller's telephone number and call back to ascertain the legitimacy of the request and if possible have the requesting agency send a teletype message to our Office.
- C. Deputies delivering emergency notifications shall tell the next of kin the source of information and who to contact for further assistance.
- D. An entry shall be made into the Impact Records Management System including all pertinent information.

IV. REQUESTS TO OTHER AGENCIES:

- A. If an outside agency or other jurisdiction is requested to make notification, provide such agency or jurisdiction with all pertinent details at your disposal.
- B. Request that the notification is made in person as quickly as possible and that you receive immediate verification thereafter that this has been accomplished.
- C. The deputy/desk officer/dispatcher will record said request by making an entry into Impact Records Management System.
- D. When requested, send a teletype to such agency or jurisdiction including all pertinent information.

REFERENCE: ACCREDITATION STANDARD 43.7