

WISCONSIN HONOR GUARD ASSOCIATION

Category I “Full Honors”

Line-of-Duty Death Funeral Protocols

The following document is designed to assist Law Enforcement Agencies in managing a Line-of-Duty Death (LODD) or a “Full Honors” Funeral along with customary procedures associated with the tragic event. A Line-of-Duty Death can be defined as the Death of an active duty Officer/Deputy, by felonious or accidental means, during the course of performing Law Enforcement duties.

Family survivors of the decedent include spouse, children, parents, siblings, and a fiancé or significant other. Wishes of the family survivors, regarding ceremony elements, should be followed, whenever possible.

The three main components denoting a Full Honors Funeral are a Flag-Draped Casket (), a Rifle Salute, and the playing of Taps. These traditional elements should be reserved for a Line-of-Duty Death. There are several ceremonious or traditional elements that could, at the discretion of the agency head, be included in funeral events; however, those three elements shall be reserved for LODD funeral events.*

Upon the tragic event of a Line-of-Duty Death, an agency may contact LEDR (Law Enforcement Death Response Teams) through the State Patrol; LEDR which will assist an agency in managing the emotional and counseling aspects of this tragic event. In turn, WHGA is notified by LEDR to offer resources in the ceremonial aspects associated with a Full Honors Funeral. This enormous task may take several days, and it is recommended that an agency implement the Incident Command System.

I. PLANNING / COORDINATION

- A. Designate an Incident Commander, preferably one of higher rank with decision-making authority.
- B. The Incident Commander shall announce a planning meeting and may activate the following positions.

1. Command Liaison Officer

- a. Point of contact for all outside agencies, dignitaries and VIPs.
- b. Assists VIPs and large delegations; assure their visibility to the family
- c. Maintain documentation of attendance of such persons and delegations for follow-up letters of appreciation

2. Operations Leader

- a. Identify the operational period and create an Operations Plan: modify, as necessary.

- b. Attend all planning meetings with all components.
- c. Explore the need for bomb sweeps at all venues, prior to arrival, especially VIPs.
- d. Responsible for After Action Debrief.

3. Planning / Logistics Leader

- a. Coordinate planning meetings, maintain contact with Religious Leaders, Family Liaison, Funeral Director, Benefits Counselor, and all other Command Positions.
- b. Arrange for bagpipers, audio experts, tow trucks, EMS, refreshments, and toilets at all venues
- c. Maintain all accounts and receipts. Supply and account for all equipment
- d. Arrange for the comfort of the family and VIPs at all venues

4. Ceremonies Group Leader (Honor Guard)

- a. Research, plan and execute all funeral related elements, **plan all ceremonious events at each venue**, including, but not limited to: exact placement of Honor Guard details, placement and location of the hearse, gallery of LE attendees, as well as civilians, and the family of the Decedent.

There needs to be a designated OIC to give orders to the gallery of uniformed Law Enforcement Officers. This could be the OIC of that venue, and that person should have specific knowledge of when to bring the gallery to Attention, Present-ARMS, and Order-ARMS. The OIC may also be responsible for positioning of the gallery, with assistance.

5. Traffic Group Supervisor

- a. Plan for full traffic control to and from all venues, parking and contingency parking, and remote transportation (buses), if needed
- b. Work through the Command Liaison to notify any/all jurisdictions affected

6. Family Liaison Officer (may have been pre-chosen by the family or Decedent)

- a. ONLY point of contact to the family, should have no other responsibilities other than to attend to the survivors

The concerns of the survivors are paramount in this tragic event, and an agency must ensure that the family's wishes, through the Family Liaison Officer, are met.

7. Public Information Officer

- a. coordinate and prepare communications with the public/media re the incident/death, keeping in mind investigative and survivor concerns.

At the discretion of the agency head, one person could assume one of more of these responsibilities, depending upon that individual and agency resources.

II. PROCEDURALS

A Chief or Sheriff has an obligation to assist the decedent's family in their wishes, however, must also take into account the obligation to the Law Enforcement family as well. If the decedent, through his prior notification to the Department, does not wish a Law Enforcement Funeral, the Chief or Sheriff may plan and hold a ceremonious event, to commemorate the decedent, for the "well being" of the organization.

A. Upon notification of the death or serious injury of an officer, the family shall have the privilege of Police Escorts to:

1. Hospital, Mortuary / Funeral Home, place of Worship and Cemetery
2. Family Liaison Officer will ensure physical escorts at and into each venue.

B. Elements of a Category I Full Honors Funeral include, but not limited to:

1. Standing Color Teams at the Funeral Home, Worship site and Cemetery
2. Casket Watch at visitation and/or prior to religious service
3. Pall Bearers at each venue
4. U.S. Flag-draped casket. (U.S. Flag touched to casket for additional survivors.)
5. Ceremonious movement of decedent by honor Guard personnel in full uniform at all venues
6. Rifle Salute
7. Playing of Taps
8. Bagpipers
9. "Last Call" or "End of Watch" Radio Call

Aircraft flyovers, equestrian elements, and the release of birds can also be considered.

C. Probable Order of Ceremonious Events

1. Place of worship
 - a. Decedent ceremoniously delivered into the place of worship vestibule.
 - b. U.S. Colors may be removed (not ceremoniously folded) for the placement of a religious shroud.
 - c. Unless assigned a ceremonious detail, covers (hats) are removed while in the sanctuary

(After the ceremony)

- d. Decedent is removed to the vestibule, U.S. Colors re-placed on the casket
- e. Decedent is ceremoniously placed into the Hearse

(A momentary lapse of time assures that the family is in place in the procession, and allows for the Color Teams, Casket Team to jump to next venue.)

2. Cemetery

- a. Hearse arrives and is staged at the pre-determined point
- b. After all details present are on-line and brought to “ATTENTION”
- c. The Decedent is removed from the hearse, all elements will be brought to “PRESENT-ARMS” (Hand Salute) and will remain at Present-Arms until the Decedent is placed at grave- or committal site. (Rifles will PRESENT.)
- d. After burial rights, the U.S. Flag will be raised over the casket in preparation for the ceremonial folding;
- e. The Gallery of Law Enforcement Officers will be brought to “PRESENT-ARMS”,

- Color Teams will be at PRESENT-ARMS
- f. Rifle Team, upon the Flag raised above the casket, will fire the 3 volleys
 - Rifles will then be brought to “PRESENT-ARMS”
 - g. Bugler will then render Taps
 - h. At the conclusion of Taps, all elements will be brought to “ORDER-ARMS”
 - i. Bagpipers will play from the end of Taps to just before the Flag is presented, according to the ceremonious traditions, to the Survivors
 - j. “Last Radio Call” (secure channel)
 - k. Announcement for the conclusion of services
 - l. Bagpiper performs a Fade-Away

() It is of the opinion of WHGA that in all deaths of a Law Enforcement Officer in good standing, the United States Colors should be afforded to the Decedent.*

This is a condensed version of a policy to serve as a ready reference to Law Enforcement Agency Heads in the enormous task of planning and carrying out a Category I “Full Honors” Funeral. Clearly there are several variables that may come into play, however, effective preparation and activating the Honor Guard Community to again come together will certainly demonstrate an agency’s commitment to its Law Enforcement family. Moreover, this will leave a lasting memory that even though their loved one gave the ultimate sacrifice, they did not perish alone.

The Wisconsin Honor Guard Association (WHGA) serves as a resource to assist Law Enforcement Agencies in honoring our fallen Brothers and Sisters in the most traditional and time-honored ceremonious way during the most tragic time in the life of the survivors and the agency.

*Wisconsin Honor Guard Association
Chair Douglas Tuttle*

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