



DEATH/ SERIOUS INJURY NOTIFICATION

✓ new: rescinds: amends:		cross-reference:
effective date: September, 2020		accreditation standards: NYSLEAP Standard(s): 43.7
amend date:		

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to insure prompt notification of “next of kin” or “significant others” in all cases of death or serious injury that are handled by the Tompkins County Sheriff’s Office, and to establish and define office procedure in making such notifications.

II. PROCEDURES

- A. Every effort shall be made to locate and notify the next of kin and or significant other as soon as possible.
- B. Officers should gather and verify essential details surrounding the deceased or seriously injured. For example, the officer should record such details as the:
 - Deceased or seriously injured individuals full name,
 - Age,
 - Gender,
 - Home address,
 - Location of death/injury,
 - Nature of death/injury,
 - Time of death/injury,
 - Location of body,
- C. Enroute to the next of kin and/or significant other’s residence, the officer should take the time to review these details.
- D. It is recommended that a close friend, clergy or neighbor accompany the member making a death notification if at all possible.
- E. If the notification has to be made alone, the officer should offer to assist the next of kin in contacting a relative, close friend, etc.

- F. All such notifications shall be made in person and not by telephone or written correspondence. If the party to be notified does not reside within the office's jurisdiction or within a reasonable distance, a request for the appropriate police agency to make such notification will be initiated.

Note: Notification by telephone may be done only under exigent circumstances and with approval from a supervisor.

- G. When you need to contact another agency outside your jurisdiction in order to perform the notification, provide them with all the pertinent details at your disposal. Request that they make the notification in person as quickly as possible and that you receive immediate verification thereafter that this has been accomplished.
- H. It is very important that the officer be permitted inside the house before actual notification is made.
 - 1. A death/serious injury notification conveys very personal and private information, this information should not be initially shared by others; nor should the next of kin/significant other's need for personal privacy be compromised at this traumatic moment.
 - 2. 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 officer may not be able to assist.
- I. Extreme tact and a direct approach should be exercised by officers. Officers should deliver the notification in a gradual but direct manner. The pace of your delivery will be dictated by the actions of the survivor. The officer should speak in a slow, calm manner and proceed with the notification until completed.
- J. If the individual has died, relay that information. Never give the family a false sense of hope. Use words such as "died" rather than "gone away" or "passed away."
- K. Officers should display an attitude of understanding and sympathy and express a desire to assist.
- L. If necessary, assist the next of kin/ significant other by providing a ride to the hospital.
- M. 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 is best left to a physician or medical examiner to discuss at a later time. Being too graphic at this stage can create an emotional overload which can complicate an already difficult situation.

III. REQUESTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES

- A. When requested by another agency to make notification, the officer should obtain whatever pertinent information is available about the situation in order to assist the next of kin/significant other in receiving the message.

- B. Prior to making the notification, the information must be authenticated. The officer should obtain the agency and caller's telephone number to verify the legitimacy of the request.
- C. Officers delivering the notification shall tell the next of kin/ significant other the source of information and who to contact for further assistance.

By Order Of

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Derek Osborne".

Derek Osborne
Sheriff