


GENERAL ORDER	ISSUE DATE: November 13, 2023 REVISED DATE:	NO. 600-37
JACKSON POLICE DEPARTMENT 	REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior departmental directives on this subject.	
SUBJECT: DEATH NOTIFICATIONS		

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to ensure prompt notification of “next of kin” or “significant others” in all cases that the Jackson Police Department handles and to establish and define department procedures in making such notifications. Death notifications will be made to the adult next of kin and/or significant other.

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. For example, the officer should record such details as the following:

- Deceased individual's full name
- Age
- Gender
- Home address
- Location of death
- Nature of death
- Time of death
- Location of the body

C. En route to the next of kin and significant other’s residence, the officer should take the time to review these details.

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D. It is recommended that death notification not be made alone; officers should have an accompanying officer or a member of the coroner's office when making a death notification if possible.

E. If the notification must 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 notified does not reside within the department's jurisdiction or a reasonable distance, a request for the appropriate law enforcement agency to make such notification will be initiated.

G. When you need to contact another agency outside your jurisdiction 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 notification conveys very personal and private information; others should not initially share this information, nor should the next of kin or 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. Officers should exercise extreme tact and a direct approach. 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 the notification is completed.

J. Officers should be direct when delivering a death notification. 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 a demeanor of understanding and sympathy and express a desire to assist.

L. 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 later. Being too graphic at this stage can create an emotional overload, complicating a difficult situation.

N. All efforts will be made to locate the next of kin using all available resources, including the Intelligence Unit and Fusion Center.

O. The notifying officer shall document in their report details of the notification to include the date, time, location, and to whom the notification was made. The relation of the person notified and the deceased will also be included in the report.

III. NOTIFYING ELEMENTS

1. The Crimes Against Persons Unit shall make next-of-kin notifications in cases involving death or any other cases in which the unit has investigative responsibility.

2. The Accident Investigations Unit shall make next-of-kin notifications in cases involving death resulting from traffic-related incidents falling under their investigative authority.

A. The notifying officer shall identify the next of kin according to the priority list provided in this order. When determining next of kin, the member shall not move on to the next individual in order of priority until the member has made every effort to locate the prior individual without success. Once the appropriate individual is identified as the person standing highest in the order of priority, no one else shall be considered the next of kin.

B. Once the notifying officer establishes the next of kin, notifications shall occur as soon as possible. Notifications shall take place in person whenever possible.

- C. Before notification, the notifying officer shall reasonably attempt to ascertain the next of kin’s physical and mental condition. Suppose the next of kin is elderly, ill, or unwell. In that case, members shall make every effort to have a family member, friend, neighbor, member of the clergy, or physician present at the time of notification, even if the individual appears to be in good physical and mental health.
- D. If notification occurs at a place of employment, notifying officers shall contact the person in charge of the business to ascertain the physical and mental condition of the next of kin and request a company nurse or other appropriate person to be present at the time of notification.
- E. When conducting next of kin notifications in another jurisdiction, notifying officers shall request the presence of the local jurisdiction to accompany them during the notification.
- F. Officers shall ensure that the next of kin’s identity is confirmed before providing any information. Any future communication related to the case shall be addressed to the next of kin unless otherwise requested by the next of kin.
- G. Officers shall display empathy and compassion when notifying the next of kin. Whenever possible, officers shall:

Next of Kin Notification Techniques
a. Gradually conduct the notification, avoiding blunt or abrupt disclosure of the news by careful selection of each word or phrase and the manner in which the notification occurs.
b. Carefully evaluate the mental and emotional state of the next of kin, and be prepared to give a definitive notification of the circumstances involved.
c. Anticipate that the next of kin may question the notification with various emotions ranging from sorrow to anger. The grief cycle begins once the notification is made, and members are encouraged to be as supportive as possible.

H. Definitions:

	Term	Definition
1.	Adult	A person who is 18 years of age or older.
2.	Grief cycle	Five nonlinear stages (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) are a part of the framework that makes up an individual's learning to live with a loss. The stages are considered tools to help identify what individuals may be feeling.
3.	Next of kin	<p>A person's closest living relative or relatives. Members shall notify the individual standing highest in the following order of priority:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Spouse or domestic partner. b. Adult child; c. Parent. d. Adult sibling. e. Adult grandchild. f. Adult nephew or niece. g. Grandparent. h. Adult uncle or aunt. i. Adult child of uncle or aunt. j. Great-grandparent; k. Sibling of a grandparent; l. Relative of the spouse or domestic partner of the deceased, in accordance with the preceding order of priority or m. Adult friend or volunteer. <p><u>NOTE:</u> The oldest class member has a prior claim over other members of the same class.</p>

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IV. REQUEST FROM OTHER AGENCIES

- A. When requested by another agency to make a notification, the officer should obtain whatever pertinent information is available about the situation to assist the next of kin or significant other in receiving the message.
- B. Before making the notification, the information must be authenticated. The officer should obtain the agency and caller's telephone number to verify the request's legitimacy.
- C. Officers delivering the notification shall tell the next of kin or significant other the source of information and who to contact for further assistance.


Joseph Wade
Chief of Police

11.13.23
Date