

Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial Association

“Greater Love No Man Hath Than He Lay Down His Life For Others”



“OFFICER DOWN” – The First 48 Hours For The CLEO

If you are receiving this information, it is probably because your agency has just lost an officer. On behalf of the Minnesota Law Enforcement Memorial Association (LEMA) and law enforcement across the state of Minnesota, we are very sorry for the loss to the officer’s family and friends, your agency, and the community.

MN LEMA’s primary focus is to support you during this difficult time and come alongside you to help make the seemingly insurmountable task of planning a full law enforcement honors funeral manageable. This document is intended to give you some initial suggestions on what to expect and how to get your bearings and get through the next couple days.

DAY 1 – IMPORTANT TASKS

- 1) **THE PRIMARY FOCUS IS ALWAYS ON THE SURVIVORS!! NO EXCEPTIONS!! Everything done from this moment forward MUST be focused on what is in the best interest of the Family!**
- 2) **LOCATE THE OFFICER’S CRITICAL INCIDENT FORM** (if completed). This form should give you important contact information and outline the Officer’s wishes after their death.
- 3) **CONTACT THE SURVIVOR** – If you have not already done so, make contact with the Survivor – preferably in person. Some initial things to keep in mind-
 - a. Does your family have any immediate needs? (Child Care, Food, Financial, Accommodations for out-of-town family).
 - b. Do you have questions about the incident, if applicable. (Ongoing investigations, updates of search for/status of suspects, rumors, viewing of crime scenes, viewing of the officer’s body, funeral planning, etc.). The CLEO should do their very best to give honest, candid answers to the family to these questions with tact and compassion!
 - c. Are you interested in a law enforcement honors funeral? (If so, we will walk you through your choices in what this means in the coming days).
 - d. We are going to appoint a Family Liaison Officer from our agency who will be walking alongside of you through the next couple weeks. Do you have a preference of who you would like this to be (Or I’m thinking of this Officer – Are you ok with this)?
- 4) **CONTACT MN LEMA ASAP** – Preferably in the first 24 hours. The sooner LEMA is contacted, the sooner we can step in and support you and your team through all stages of the planning. Contact LEMA President Brian Hubbard (763-807-0525), Vice-President Jim Felt (320-212-6851), or Honor Guard Commander Dave Holmquist (320-894-8579) anytime.
- 5) **APPOINT SOMEONE TO COORDINATE STANDING GUARD OVER YOUR OFFICER (AND ANY PROCESSION IF NEEDED)** – Although, there probably has already been a contingent standing guard at the hospital or funeral home, having someone coordinate a schedule and ensuring creature comforts will help make sure your officers feel supported and are getting time to rest.
- 6) **APPOINT A FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER** – This will be one of the most important decisions you will make during this process. This Officer is typically a partner from your agency or a neighboring agency who was close to the Fallen Officer and possibly already knows the family. This Officer will interact with the family to coordinate the funeral arrangements on behalf of the planning team and the department. Ascertaining the family wishes is paramount and must guide all of the funeral planning.

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DAY 2 – WHAT TO EXPECT

- 1) **INITIAL LEMA MEETINGS** – LEMA Representatives will ask to have to initial meetings within a day or so of being notified of the Officer’s death to begin facilitating the planning process.
 - a. **SURVIVOR MEETING** – Meeting with the Survivor (& anyone they would like present), the CLEO, the Family Liaison Officer, the LEMA Honor Guard Commander, and a LEMA Board Member. The goal of this time is to meet the Survivor, reassure her that all of the details will be taken care of for them and their wishes, and explain some of the law enforcement honor options the Survivor has to choose from. This meeting typically lasts about 45 minutes and is held at a location of the Survivor’s choosing.
 - b. **CLEO MEETING** – After the Survivor Meeting, the LEMA team will have a meeting with the CLEO, the Family Liaison Officer, and the Incident Commander (if appointed). The goal of this time is to provide the CLEO with some initial information and to provide and explain the Funeral Planning Kit. This meeting typically lasts 60-90 minutes and is typically held at a room at the Agency.
- 2) **APPOINT THE INCIDENT COMMANDER** – This position is an incredibly vital piece of a successful funeral planning process and event. The Incident Commander is typically a supervisory-level member of the Fallen Officer’s Agency (that was not very close to the Fallen Officer) or from a neighboring agency. This position, with the close assistance of MN LEMA, is the overall Officer in charge of the entire planning process and event. This position will organize and facilitate the planning meetings along with LEMA and will coordinate the information and plans between the various Funeral Coordinators as needed.
- 3) **APPOINT THE FUNERAL PLANNING TEAM** – Using the Funeral Planning Kit and guidance from the LEMA Team, determine and recruit all of the Planning Coordinator positions that will be necessary for the successful planning of the funeral details. Set a time for an initial planning meeting with the Funeral Planning Meeting for Day 3.
- 4) **WORK THE PLAN** – The LEMA Funeral Planning Kit has been used with hundreds of Officer funerals. This includes on-duty and off-duty deaths from communities and agencies of all sizes, large and small, in all sections of the state of Minnesota. It is a very helpful guide that breaks down the various complexities involved in the planning to make it all manageable. We strongly suggest using the parts of the Kit that are appropriate for the situation and work the plan.
- 5) **DON’T TRY TO DO IT YOURSELF OR WITHIN YOUR AGENCY** - Regardless of the size of agency, experience has shown that it is best to have other agencies handle most of the Funeral Coordinator roles. If agency size permits, your officers could fill these positions. However, it is often very difficult for home agency officers to fill these roles due to their own grieving or inability to provide the necessary focus to task completion. Remember, other agencies and MN LEMA are always willing and able to provide the necessary personnel and leadership to help complete a successful event – Just as you would do for any other agency going through this!
- 6) **NO STUPID QUESTIONS** – As a CLEO, you typically have “been there, done that” with regards to most areas of law enforcement and leadership. However, chances are high you’ve never had to plan for an Officer’s funeral before. MN LEMA is at your side to help you, your agency, and the Survivors get through this and ALL questions should be asked as they come to mind!