

United States Certified Ceremonial Guardsman

First Responder Funeral Guidelines



Contents

INTRODUCTION 3

DEFINITIONS..... 3

I. FUNERAL HONORS CATEGORIES 4

II. FAMILY LIAISON 6

III. DURING THE FUNERAL CEREMONY 6

IV. NOTIFICATIONS- NON-LODD & OTHER FUNERALS..... 6

Developed in Coordination with Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and West Palm
BeachPolice Department

INTRODUCTION

- I. First responder employees have a sense of family that develops from the close working relationships and fellowship that is characteristic of the law enforcement, firefighting, and emergency medical service professions. It is important to demonstrate proper respect for the deceased, the next of kin, and coworkers.
- II. This document establishes the different levels of funeral honors and guidelines for official representation of the honor guard at funeral ceremonies.

DEFINITIONS

I. GENERAL TERMS

- i. NOK - Stands for Next of Kin, the closest family member(s) to the deceased, usually a spouse.
- ii. COACH - A much more gentle term for the hearse. Used in front of the family.
- iii. HGC - Honor Guard Commander.
- iv. FLAG TYPE - It is up to the NOK to decide on whether the deceased has a casket draped with the American, state, or municipal flag. Every American citizen is authorized to have the American flag on their casket. It is just a question of who will fold and present the flag.

II. CEREMONIAL ELEMENTS

- i. CASKET WATCH - At minimum, one, but usually two unarmed (does not apply to service weapon) honor guard members stationed individually at the head and foot of the casket during the period of visitation or viewing of the deceased. Guards are changed on a rotation basis. The length of the watch depends on the number of trained watch guards. Heads-down is not authorized. Casket Watch guards must remain looking forward for communication with other team members including cues.
- ii. COLOR GUARD - At a minimum, four honor guard members: two rifle/axe guards and two color bearers (US and state). The team may add a departmental flag. If the deceased served simultaneously in two departments (e.g. LEO and fire), both departmental colors may be added in joint service order: LEO, Fire, EMS.
- iii. TROOP ESCORT - Uniformed members who flank the walkway between the house of worship or funeral home and the coach/caisson and gravesite.
- iv. FIRING PARTY - Four or eight honor guard members (including the commander) who fire three volleys over the gravesite during the graveside service.
- v. PALLBEARERS - Six or eight honor guard members designated to carry the casket.
- vi. HONORARY PALLBEARERS - Six or eight friends of the deceased and/or uniformed personnel designated to flank the pallbearers. At the discretion of the NOK.

- vii. CAISSON - A fire truck with the hose bed used to transport the casket. Some cemeteries have a replica caisson made of wood that is either pulled by horses or the honorary pallbearers.
- viii. MOTOR ESCORT - a minimum of two but no more than four LEOs on motorcycles to help the funeral procession through traffic.
- ix. LAST RADIO CALL - Coordinated with central dispatch. The call goes out for the deceased's badge number with no reply.
- x. CAPARISONED HORSE - A saddled rider less horse.
- xi. AVIATION FLYOVER - A single aircraft coordinated to fly over before the flag fold and presentation to the NOK.
- xii. BURIAL AT SEA - If the uniformed member served with a marine unit, burial at sea (casket or urn) is authorized provided it is in accordance with local environmental requirements.
- xiii. PIPES AND DRUMS - the musical unit to play whenever the casket is transferred from a building to transportation and to the gravesite.
- xiv. LONE PIPER - For funerals not authorized a full pipe band.
- xv. USHERS - (not a ceremonial element, can be department employees or family friends, check with NOK) used in the chapel service to direct the attendees where to sit.

I. FUNERAL HONORS CATEGORIES

The following categories outline each ceremonial element provided and the number of members of the element in parenthesis. There are specifics listed below that only apply to a LEO or firefighter funeral.

- I. **Full Honors Funeral - Line of Duty Death.** A uniformed sworn employee who sustains a Line of Duty Death as designated by the Sheriff/Chief and is in good standing with the agency, receives the following:
 - i. Casket Watch (2)
 - ii. Pallbearers (8)
 - iii. Honorary Pallbearers (8)
 - iv. Flag Draped Casket (US, state, or municipal - NOK)
 - v. Flag Fold (2+) and presentation
 - vi. Color Guard (4+)
 - vii. Apparatus Caisson
 - viii. Motor Escort
 - ix. Firing Party (8)
 - x. Bell Ceremony
 - xi. Taps (live bugler)
 - xii. Last radio call
 - xiii. Ushers
 - xiv. Pipes & Drums
 - xv. Aviation Flyover (if aviation unit)
 - xvi. Caparisoned Horse (if mounted unit)
 - xvii. Burial at Sea (if marine unit)

II. **Standard Honors Funeral - Line of Duty Death.** An active civilian employee who sustains a line of duty death as designated by the Sheriff/Chief and is in good standing with the agency, receives the following:

- i. Flag Draped Casket (US, state, or municipal - NOK)
- ii. Flag Fold (2) and presentation
- iii. Color Guard (4+)
- iv. Motor Escort
- v. Pipes & Drums
- vi. Last radio call
- vii. Ushers

III. **Regular Honors Funeral - Deceased While Employed.** A uniformed sworn employee who sustains a Non-Line of Duty Death as designated by the Sheriff/Chief and is in good standing with the agency, receives the following:

- i. Casket Watch (1, 2 if manning allows)
- ii. Color Guard (4+)
- iii. Pallbearers (6)
- iv. Flag Draped Casket (US, state, or municipal - NOK)
- v. Flag Fold (2+) and presentation
- vi. Motor Escort
- vii. Firing Party (4)
- viii. Bell Ceremony
- ix. Last radio call
- x. Taps (live or digital)
- xi. Solo Piper
- xii. Ushers
- xiii. Aviation Flyover (if aviation unit and manning allows)
- xiv. Caparisoned Horse (if mounted unit)
- xv. Burial at Sea (if marine unit)

IV. **Modified Honors Funeral - Deceased While Employed.** An active civilian who sustains a Non-Line of Duty Death as designated by the Sheriff/Chief and is in good standing with the agency, may receive the following honors:

- i. Color Guard (4)
- ii. Motor Escort
- iii. Flag Fold (2) and presentation
- iv. Ushers

V. **Uniformed Retiree Funeral Honors.** A retired sworn uniformed employee who sustains a Non-Line of Duty Death as designated by the Sheriff/Chief and is in good standing with the agency, may receive the following honors:

- i. Color Guard (4)
- ii. Flag Fold (2) and presentation
- iii. Taps
- iv. Ushers

VI. Employee Retiree Funeral Honors. A retired civilian who sustains a Non-Line of Duty Death as designated by the Sheriff/Chief and is in good standing with the agency, receives the following:

- i. Color Guard
- ii. Flag Fold (2) and presentation
- iii. Ushers

II. FAMILY LIAISON

- i. **Administrative Coordination.** The appointed Family Liaison is responsible for securing pension, insurance, state or federal compensation, or benefits due the deceased's NOK.
- ii. **Ceremonial Coordination.** The Family Liaison will contact the NOK to ascertain if they wish official participation in the funeral. If official participation is desired, the Family Liaison will contact the HGC to coordinate with the funeral director regarding ceremonial duties at each stop of the procession.
- iii. The HGC and ceremonial element leaders will visit the funeral home, house of worship, and gravesite to coordinate arrangements for each ceremonial element and report back to the Family Liaison.

III. DURING THE FUNERAL CEREMONY

- i. During all ceremonies and especially in front of the NOK, the specific terms must be used to reflect the professionalism of the team and dignity of the event (funeral, colors presentation, etc.). The following are terms and their subsequent replacement:
 - a. Hearse - instead use, "Coach".
 - b. Coffin - instead use, "Casket". In the USA, we do not normally carry a coffin, a six-sided container without handles.
 - c. "Detail" - This generic term conveys a sense of "I need some volunteers" and those volunteers are possibly reluctant. Instead, use the ceremonial element terms: "Firing Party", "Colors", and [pall] "Bearers". When writing about a request for ceremonial presence (a "detail"), use the term, "Ceremony" to be more clear.
 - d. Fire Team, Firing Squad, and Rifle Team - These terms are not accurate descriptions of the ceremonial element known as the Firing party.
- ii. See the book, *The Honor Guard Manual*, for a complete description of all ceremonial honors connected with a funeral and other occasions and the sequence of events.

IV. NOTIFICATIONS- NON-LODD & OTHER FUNERALS

The following are procedures for civilian employees, retired employees and active or retired members from other agencies.

- i. Upon notification of a line of duty death from another agency, the Communications Supervisor forwards the notification to the Sheriff/Chief and HGC.
- ii. Sheriff/Chief notifies HGC on recommended representation.
- iii. HGC sends recommendation for official representation to Sheriff/Chief.
- iv. Sheriff/Chief gives final approval.
- v. HGC notifies honor guard members of requirement to deploy.