

**SENECA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDER**

General Order: 565	Rescinds: 07/01/13
Subject: Next of Kin Notification	NYS Accreditation: 43.7
Effective Date: 09/21/2016 By Order Of: Stuart W. Peenstra, Chief of Police	

I. PURPOSE

- A. To establish procedures relative to the conduct of next of kin notification of deceased, seriously injured or serious ill citizens.
- B. The Seneca Falls Police Department recognizes that notifications relating to serious personal incidents convey very personal and private information that should not be initially shared by others; nor should the survivor(s) need for personal privacy be compromised during such a traumatic moment.
- C. It is further recognized that notification of next of kin in these situations place the officers in a delicate and uncomfortable situation.
- D. In order to effectively address these situations, sensitivity awareness and informational guidelines have been established.

II. DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this order, the following definitions will apply:

- A. Serious personal incident - Death, serious injury, or serious illness.
- B. Immediate family - The spouse, children of current and previous marriages, parents, siblings, and others recognized by the spouse, children, or parents as having had a close relationship with the person.

III. POLICY

- A. Notification of the immediate family of a person involved in a serious personal incident will be made promptly and in a dignified and respectful manner.
- B. Employees will not divulge to the news media the identity of any person involved in a serious personal incident, unless authorized by the Chief of Police, or designee, and only after verification of notification of next of kin.

IV. PROCEDURES

A. PREPARATION

Upon assignment by a Command Officer of a notification relative to death, serious injury, or serious illness, all essential information should be obtained and the officer should record such details as:

1. The nature of death, injury or illness.
2. Date and time of death, injury, or illness.
3. Location of the body or victim.
4. The source of the information.
5. Person to be contacted for further information.
6. Any and all pertinent details surrounding the death, injury, or illness.

Every attempt must be made to verify that the information regarding the deceased, injured, or ill person is correct; and that the correct person is being notified.

B. PERSONAL NOTIFICATION

It is important that the officer be permitted inside the residence prior to making the notification. If notification is made at the door, the officer may not be able to gain admission. In this event, should the survivor(s) suffer serious medical or psychological problems, the officer would not be able to assist. The following procedure should be used whenever possible and practical.

1. Notification should be made as promptly as possible.
2. If at all possible, notification should be made in person, not over the telephone.
3. Command officers should consider making such notifications and/or assisting the assigned officer with the notification.
4. The officer should offer to assist the next of kin in contacting a member of the clergy, relative, close friend, neighbor, etc.
5. The officer must be as tactful and diplomatic as possible. Give the information a little at a time. Let the recipient set the pace for the delivery of the information. Express sympathy and desire to assist.
6. The pace of your delivery will be dictated by the actions of the survivor. If permitted, it is best to deliver your message in a gradual but direct manner. Proceed directly with the notification, speaking in a slow, calm manner, and continue until all information is given.
7. 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, detracts from a competent and compassionate notification, and is best left to a physician or medical examiner to discuss with the survivor at a later time. Being too graphic, at this stage, can create an emotional overload that can complicate an already difficult situation.
8. If necessary, assist the next of kin by providing a ride to the hospital.

V. REQUESTS FROM OTHER AGENCIES

When requested by another agency to make a notification, the dispatcher or the officer receiving this request should obtain all available and pertinent information about the situation in order to assist the relative receiving the message. Prior to making the notification, the information must be authenticated. The dispatcher or officer must obtain the caller's telephone number and call back to ascertain the legitimacy of the request. Officers delivering emergency notifications shall tell the next of kin the source of information and whom to contact for further assistance.

VI. REQUESTS TO OTHER AGENCIES

Should the need to contact another agency outside your jurisdiction present itself, provide the agency 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, after this has been accomplished.