



Firefighting continues to be one of the nation's most hazardous professions.

Approximately 100 firefighters die in the

line-of-duty each year in the United States. It is only fitting, given the heroic efforts of fire service personnel that they be given the final respect they deserve.

Many volunteer fire departments do not have funeral procedures in place due to time restrictions. When a death occurs, departments are often unprepared to navigate the complexities of a fire service funeral. The following information in this brochure provides departments with a basic understanding of what steps need to be taken to successfully execute a firefighter funeral.

To download the complete *Funeral Procedures Guide for Firefighters*, visit: [www.nvfc.org/LODD](http://www.nvfc.org/LODD).



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# Funeral Procedures for Firefighters

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL







## Key Personnel Roles

*Note: If the department is small or is playing a lesser role in the family’s funeral plans, one department member may take on the responsibilities of more than one of these positions.*

### Chaplain

All departments are encouraged to have an active Chaplain program. The amount of involvement the Chaplain has will depend upon the family’s wishes and/or religion.

### Survivor Action Officer

The Survivor Action Officer coordinates the activities of a number of personnel assigned to handle specific aspects of the funeral arrangements and to assist the surviving family. His/her principal concern is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin.

### Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer reports directly to the Survivor Action Officer and is responsible for maintaining a communication link between the family and the department.

### Funeral Officer

The Funeral Officer’s duties include the primary responsibility of ensuring that the wishes of the family and the special requests of the individual are coordinated with the Funeral Director and Chaplain.

### Procession Officer

The Procession Officer has the primary responsibility of coordinating the transportation arrangements and funeral procession from the funeral home to the church and then finally to the cemetery.

### Service Officer

The Service Officer has the primary responsibility of coordinating all of the activities and ceremonies at the church if a religious funeral has been requested by the family.

### Cemetery Officer

The Cemetery Officer is primarily responsible for the coordination and preparation of the events from the time the procession vehicles are stopped at the cemetery and the people exit their vehicles.

### Transportation Officer

The Transportation Officer will be responsible for arranging the transportation of all visiting out-of-town guests to and from the airports and funeral service.

### Funeral Detail

All members of the department not otherwise detailed will act as the funeral detail, in dress uniform, no gloves required.

### Honor Guard

At least four honor guards are required. Two honor guards, one for the head and one for the foot of the casket, should be scheduled for 15 minute shifts.

### Honorary Pallbearers

Personnel designated as honorary pallbearers, usually retirees or members of the deceased’s company. Honorary Pallbearer should move ahead of the casket as it is moved at all times.

## Checklist



- > Notify next of kin, department members, and appropriate associations
- > Assign personnel roles and immediately identify a liaison from the department to communicate with the family
- > Begin processing any benefits such as the Public Safety Officers’ Benefits (PSOB) program, any Association benefits, and other policies such as Accidental Death or Dismemberment
- > Identify the wishes of the deceased and his/her family
- > Locate the necessary supplies:
  - Color guard standards
  - Flag for casket
  - Black 3/4” plastic tape or elastic bands
  - Black bunting
  - White gloves
  - Signs for vehicles in a fire department funeral procession
- > Order floral arrangements
- > Plan procession logistics including order, route, traffic control points, and apparatus
- > Identify Honor Guard and Pallbearers
- > Determine the level of department members’ participation in the service and select readings or prayers
- > Determine staging of official vehicles and apparatus and seating arrangements throughout the funeral
- > Arrange for any special requests such as a firing squad, Taps or other musical arrangements, or a Last Alarm Service
- > Develop a detailed agenda and host a walk through for funeral participants

It is important to maintain communication with the family and Funeral Director at all times. Detailed descriptions of the items included in the checklist, along with other items to consider, can be found in the full version of the NVFC’s *Funeral Procedures for Firefighters* guide at [www.nvfc.org/LODD](http://www.nvfc.org/LODD).



### Main Points to Remember

- > Be prepared by maintaining personal information sheets for each department member and designating roles to personnel.
- > Meet the wishes of the person being honored.
- > Meet the wishes of the family.
- > Meet the wishes of the department and other organizations.
- > Fire department personnel are not Funeral Directors. The main objectives are to assist, coordinate, and organize.

To download the *Funeral Procedures for Firefighters* guide in its entirety and access other valuable resources, visit [www.nvfc.org/LODD](http://www.nvfc.org/LODD).



## Filing a PSOB Claim

**The following information is needed when filing a PSOB claim:**

- > **PSOB Report** of Public Safety Officer's Death form completed and signed by the head of the public safety agency.
- > Detailed **Statement of Circumstances** from the initiation of the incident to the pronouncement of the officer's death.
- > Investigation, Incident, and/or Accident **Reports**.
- > **Death Certificate**.
- > **Autopsy Report**, or a statement signed by the head of the public safety agency or the medical examiner explaining that no autopsy was performed.
- > **Toxicology Report**, or a statement signed by the head of the public safety agency or the medical examiner explaining that no analysis was performed.
- > Officer's current **Marriage Certificate**, if applicable.
- > **Divorce Decrees** for all the officer's and current spouse's previous marriages, including references to physical custody of any children, if applicable.
- > **Death Certificates** for all the officer's and current spouse's previous marriages, if any of the marriages ended in death, if applicable.
- > **Birth Certificates** for all the officer's surviving children and step-children, regardless of age or dependency, identifying the children's parents, if applicable.
- > More documents or information may be needed for death or permanent injury due to suicide or post-traumatic stress (PTS), which were made eligible for PSOB benefits via the Public Safety Benefit Support Act of 2022. You may consult this FAQ document for more background: <https://bja.ojp.gov/doc/psosa-faq.pdf>
- > Additional information may be found in the PSOB Check List at [https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/death\\_reqdocs\\_2018.pdf](https://bja.ojp.gov/sites/g/files/xyckuh186/files/media/document/death_reqdocs_2018.pdf) or on the PSOB webpage at <https://bja.ojp.gov/program/psob>.
- > You may also contact PSOB at **1-888-744-6513** or email the PSOB office at [AskPSOB@usdoj.gov](mailto:AskPSOB@usdoj.gov).

