

WEST PALM BEACH POLICE DEPARTMENT

IV-13 NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN

EFFECTIVE: 01/01/2005

CALEA Standards: 55.2.6

CFA Standards: N/A

I. POLICY: The West Palm Beach Police Department has a moral responsibility to ensure that every effort is made to locate and promptly notify the next of kin of deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill persons and that notification is delivered in a considerate manner. This responsibility extends not only to incidents investigated by the West Palm Beach Police Department, but to requests from other agencies and individuals.

II. NOTIFICATION HANDLED BY DEPARTMENT:

A. Whenever an incident involving a deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill person is investigated by the West Palm Beach Police Department, it is the responsibility of the assigned officer to see that all available resources are utilized in an effort to locate and notify the next of kin.

B. Whenever a request to locate or notify the next of kin is received from another agency or individual by Dispatch Operations, it will immediately be assigned to the appropriate Division for prompt action. If the Shift Commander of the affected Division determines that the request requires the assistance of a detective, he or she will immediately contact the Shift Sergeant in the Criminal Investigations Division to handle the assignment.

C. This Department will assist with personal notification requests by other law enforcement agencies or outside government or medical facilities. The following should be considered when delivering notifications:

1. Department personnel will make every effort to deliver such notifications initiated by other agencies in person.
2. Officers will attempt to determine the effect of the notification and provide the necessary support services for the next of kin, relatives of the deceased, seriously injured, or seriously ill persons whenever appropriate.
3. Officers should normally not make any notifications requested from parties whose identity cannot be otherwise confirmed without approval of the Shift Commander.

III. SPECIAL NOTIFICATIONS AND RELEASE OF INFORMATION:

A. Any time officers investigate any homicide, suspicious or unattended death (not under the care of a medical doctor or medical care facility), the Medical Examiners Office must be notified.

B. The investigating officer will coordinate custody and care of the body(s) with the Medical Examiners Office and the family of the deceased, if present.

C. The Criminal Investigations Division and the Medical Examiners Office will be apprised of all pertinent information regarding suspicious or unattended deaths.

D. The release of the identity of the deceased person(s) to the media is the responsibility of the Public Information Officer and/or designated Criminal Investigation Division personnel.

IV. PROCEDURE FOR NOTIFYING NEXT OF KIN:

A. Notification can be accomplished through personal contact or through another agency. Notification to the next of kin should include such information as disposition of body (Medical Examiners Office, funeral home) or the name of the hospital to which the injured or ill party was taken. When available, details of the incident will be provided. The investigating officer will document the name, address, telephone number, and relationship of the next of kin who is notified in both the Offense Incident Report and the Palm Beach County Medical Examiner's Office Attended Death Report Form (Appendix A).

1. Whenever possible, the officer or detective notifying next of kin will attempt to obtain the assistance of a clergyman, relative, or close friends prior to notification or as soon as possible thereafter.

2. In the event the next of kin cannot be notified, all information concerning their identity, address, telephone number, place of business, etc., will be documented in the Offense Incident Report and the report referred to the Criminal Investigations Division. The report must state, "Next of kin **not** notified".

3. If the assigned officer or detective is unable to make notification to the victim's next of kin, the officer's or detective's immediate supervisor will be notified as soon as possible.

4. Notification of death or serious injury should not be made by phone directly to next of kin who resides outside our jurisdiction. Utilize another agency to make personal contact. Obtain teletype or fax verification of notification with details as to who made contact, who was contacted, and time of notification. A telephone confirmation is not sufficient. The teletype or fax verification must be attached to the report.

B. The supervisor of the assigned officer or detective will ensure that a prompt reply is made to other agencies or individuals requesting the assistance of this Department.

V. REFERENCE:

- SOP # III-18 Supervisor Notification.

Delsa R. Bush, Chief of Police

Original issue: 07/15/88
Revised: 01/01/2005
I.D. # 1337

History: SOP # changed to IV-13 on 01/01/2005, SOP # changed to 18.19 on 08/15/98
Old SOP # 6.620.007, 18.19
Revision Dates: 08/15/98, 12/15/98, 01/01/2005

Job Title Task Files: Shift Commander, Dispatch Operations, Detective, Supervisor, P.I.O.