



# Preparing Your Agency to Handle an Officer's Death Implementation Guidance

## Description

A line-of-duty death is an unfortunate event for which every agency needs to be prepared. After the death of an officer is not the time to begin creating a working operation plan. From investigation to funeral services, agencies need policies to assist a grieving department, families, and communities.

## Suggested Activities for Executives and Administrative Team Staff

1. Listen to this podcast.
2. Distribute or assign this podcast to agency executives and command staff members.
3. Lead a discussion with your command staff members and executive leadership regarding the effectiveness of your agency's current policies on handling the funeral services for a line-of-duty death as well as services for officers who have taken their life by suicide.
4. Use ideas from this podcast and your own research to propose and implement a clear policy and guidelines on how your agency should approach these critical moments.
5. Download the SAFLEO Post-Event Guide and incorporate its suggestions into your policy for handling such matters.

## Takeaways

- Line-of-duty deaths, active-duty deaths (currently serving but does not meet the criteria for a line-of-duty death and can include natural causes), retirees, and suicides all have unique funeral and ceremonial protocols that must be considered.
- Ask the difficult questions to determine if you can honor your officer. Once the answers to these questions are determined, you should have a better

understanding surrounding whether you can proceed and or how you may go about providing the appropriate and proper honors.

- In the case of a suicide, if your agency can proceed with a funeral, it may be a good suggestion to follow a protocol outlined for a retiree grade level funeral. It is very important that the death not be honored in a way that would glorify the act yet focuses on the individual's life and their service.
- Remember, we serve at the pleasure and discretion of the family. Any decision that is made regarding a formal funeral comes with the blessing and involvement or approval of the family.

## Resources

Officer Suicide Post-Event Response Guide—Emerging Issues, Recommendations, and Considerations for Law Enforcement Organizations—<https://www.valorforblue.org/Clearinghouse/1431>

## Speaker Biographies

**Lieutenant Nicholas Breul (Retired)** is currently a senior project manager for the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund (NLEOMF). Mr. Breul has worked in officer safety and wellness for the NLEOMF since 2014. Before joining the NLEOMF, he was the director of security for the Washington National Cathedral, holding that position for two years. Prior to that, he served for 26 years with the Washington, DC, Metropolitan Police Department (MPDC). During his tenure with the MPDC, he worked as a detective, a patrol sergeant, an internal affairs agent, a homicide supervisor, and the public information officer, before retiring as the lieutenant in charge of the traffic safety branch. He is a graduate of Hobart College with a bachelor of arts degree in history.

**Officer Dan Foley (Retired)** served with the Wyandotte, Michigan, Police Department for 27 years. Shortly after being sworn in, Mr. Foley applied and was accepted to the department's honor guard unit, representing the agency and the profession at all formal functions and soon became the unit's commander. He has received extensive memorial affairs training in ceremonial and funeral protocol from the Goshen, Indiana, Honor Guard Training Program, the 3rd U.S. Infantry (Old Guard)/Arlington National Cemetery, and the U.S. Air Force Ceremonial Guard/Base Honor Guard. He has been an instructor for the Goshen Honor Guard Training Program and its sister program DFL Honor Guard Training for more than 15 years. He has been instrumental in assisting numerous agencies in the development of their honor guard teams and providing logistical advice for funerals or other ceremonial events. Mr. Foley has provided logistical and protocol advice to many programs, including Wilbert Funeral Services, Inc., and The National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial. He

presently serves the State of Michigan Memorial Team Sheriff's and Municipal Memorial Assistance Response Team and is one of the memorial affairs/training coordinators responsible for coordinating all ceremonial training and any law enforcement line-of-duty deaths/funerals.

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