

# **The Federation of Fire Chaplains Fire Chaplain Institute Training Manual**



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The work of the fire service chaplain has increased as he or she meets the challenges of working within crises settings. With these thoughts in mind this training manual has been developed to aid and assist chaplains in this work with a very special part of our society the Emergency Worker. This is *just the beginning* of this manual and we in the Federation look forward to continually adding text, training and teaching aids for our chaplains.

The picture entitled “The Beginning” portrays a chaplain about to ring the doorbell with a message that will be the beginning of a total change in the family portrayed. In the picture is a fire in the background, children playing, a spouse preparing a meal, a chief parked beside the house, a member of the Ladies Auxiliary, a firefighter, and a chaplain with a crumpled helmet at the front door. This is a portrayal of the first steps of assistance and support to this family. Each segment of the picture is placed throughout the manual with the thought the items of training for this particular setting are areas the chaplain needs to be aware of. A department or a chaplain does not have all of the necessary areas covered until they have the whole picture. This is the purpose of this manual to present a training package for our chaplains and fire departments to use not only in serious injuries or line of duty death, but to look at all aspects of living in the emergency world.

Just as the picture depicts “The Beginning” this manual also depicts a beginning of continued education and support of those involved in the Chaplaincy. It has been my distinct privilege to work in the fire service for 46 years with 34 of those years as a fire department chaplain. During this time and since the beginning of the Federation of Fire Chaplains, I have met and worked with many chaplains in this field. The writers and authors of articles and training programs in this manual are long term experienced chaplains. They have put together for the benefit of the training of chaplains an outstanding training program. It is the goal of the Federation of Fire Chaplains to continue adding to this manual as time goes on.

I want to thank all of those who have participated in bringing this manual to fruition; not only for their input but for the tremendous, unwavering support they have given to the Federation of Fire Chaplains and to me personally through the years. So, with that said, may this manual bless you, edify you, and encourage you in the work you have been called to do.

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3)*

*Ed Stauffer*



# INTRODUCTION

Over the past twenty years, people who have been willing to serve those who serve have become fire service chaplains. Some have received training for their post through the department or from someone else involved in the same ministry. Many have learned how to go about this ministry of fire service chaplaincy as they went.

*Most have learned well. This manual provides a place for those who have learned well to share their experience with others. It is not a “complete works of fire chaplaincy”, nor is it designed to become the “authoritative work.” Instead, it is hoped that the manual will begin to provide a network whereby fire service chaplains can share what is learned and further the professionalism and effectiveness of the ministry.*

The manual is divided into three parts. The first section contains an overview of the basics of fire chaplaincy. It begins with a history and foundation of the ministry, and then includes a chapter on the personhood of the fire chaplain, or “who” the chaplain is to be. The next two chapters give an overview of “what” the fire chaplain does in ministry to firefighters and ministry to crisis victims. Sections I and II contain resources for “how” to do the ministry of fire chaplaincy. Basic certification by the Federation of Fire Chaplains will include instruction in all of Section I and Section II. Classes from resources in Section III can be used for credit toward Advanced Chaplain Certification.

Many thanks to those who have contributed to the manual, and to those who will be inspired to contribute in the future. Chaplains of the Federation of Fire Chaplains are encouraged to submit articles, resources, and classes to the editor for future inclusion. Each year, at the FFC Conference, new material will be added, and the scope of training will be expanded.

The Federation of Fire Chaplains wishes to acknowledge the contributions of:

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Cameron Brown of Fort Worth Fire Department

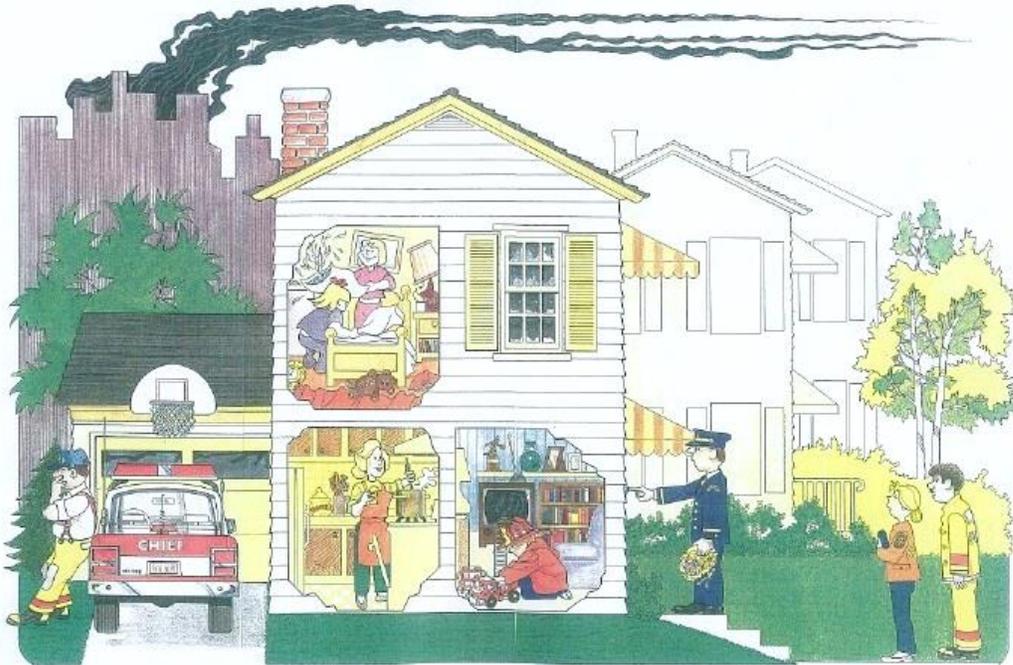
Without the cooperation and contributions of many people, the ministry of fire chaplaincy would never grow and mature. Thank you.



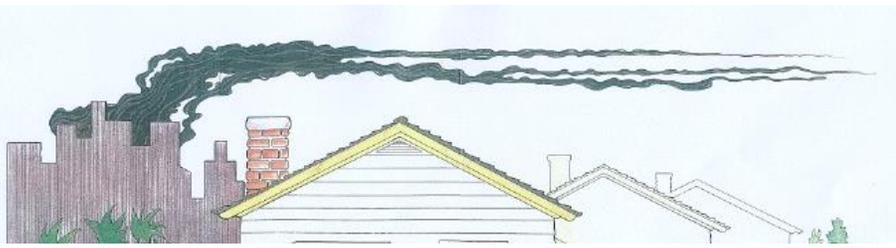
# SECTION I

## FIRE CHAPLAINCY

### OVERVIEW







# FOUNDATIONS OF FIRE CHAPLAINCY

*Tom Engberg, co-author of this chapter, is retired chaplain for the Miami Fire Department where he served for thirty-two years. Tom is past President, past Regional Director, and past Treasurer of the Federation of Fire Chaplains and has been a member since 1984. He has been a pastor and School Principal and serves as the chairman for the Fire Chaplain Institute. Tom also is a trainer for the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation.*

*Ed Stauffer, co-author of this chapter is founder and Executive Director of the Federation of Fire Chaplains. Ed served as firefighter and chaplain for the Fort Worth Fire Department, and as full-time chaplain for the past twenty-six years. He helped to develop the Pastoral Crisis Intervention training for ICISF. Ed and his wife Gayle make their home at Lake Whitney, Texas. They have six adult children together and have raised many others.*

The chaplain for a fire department may be clergy or a lay person, male or female, clergy or firefighter. The chaplain is one who takes on the role of providing spiritual and other support to those in the fire service and those affected by emergency crisis. Although there are many different levels of service, the chaplain is normally one who is appointed to the office by his or her fire department or other emergency service agency and has been endorsed by his or her own denominational authority, church, synagogue, or other religious organization. The chaplain ministers to the needs of people from all religious backgrounds without proselytizing for his or her own affiliation.

***The chaplain ministers to the needs of people from all religious backgrounds.***

In some places the fire chaplain is a local pastor who volunteers his or her time to minister to the particular needs of the firefighters in that community. Another location might have a firefighter who is living out a call of his or her faith by serving as chaplain to the other firefighters in the department. Many chaplains are volunteers, some receive reimbursement for their expenses, and others may be paid part-time or full-time by the fire department or by an

outside agency. Some raise their own funding much like independent missionaries, relying on local churches and groups to provide money.

When firefighters respond to a burning building and focus attention on saving life and protecting property, the fire chaplain responds alongside but is focusing on ministering to the needs of the firefighters and the needs of the crisis victims. Victims of an emergency crisis may be the family who has just been burned out of their home, or the scared and confused spouse of a heart attack patient. They could be the mother of a teenager who just committed suicide or the frightened children whose parents are being transported to the hospital after a traffic accident. Firefighters are trained and able to deal with the varied emergency crises of our modern world. Fire chaplains are equipped and called to deal with the people being affected by those same events.

Models for the ministry are as varied as fire departments themselves. Some are quite simple, with a single chaplain volunteering to serve a single department. Others get much more developed with several chaplains serving multiple agencies on a rotating basis under the direction of a team coordinator. Information on different models and how to start a chaplain program are included in this material. Basically, the fire chaplain is a spiritual presence in the world of fire department and emergency services.

***The fire chaplain is a spiritual presence in the world of fire department and emergency services.***

## ***ORIGINS***

Many people throughout history, when facing death and the unknown, have sought spiritual support. They recognize a higher power than themselves. This is true whether the danger or threat came from war, disease, or other perils. Often the spiritual support in these situations came from chaplains, be it in the military, fire service, police service, or in hospitals.

The word “chaplain” originates with the Medieval Latin *cappella*, meaning cape, and refers to the cape of St Martin of Tours. The well-known St. Martin was said to have shared his cape with a beggar one cold and wet night. The famous cape was preserved as a relic and displayed in a small building which came to be known as the *chapel*. The “chaplain” was initially the guardsman of the chapel, but the office was expanded as different types of chapels arose. The chaplain has always been one to share his cape in a time of need.<sup>1</sup>

Although chaplaincy has had a long tradition and history with the military and hospitals, the setting of fire department and emergency services is somewhat new to chaplain ministry. The “cape” of the Fire Chaplain may actually be a blanket placed around the shoulders of a family huddled together in their front yard as their home is burning on a winter night. It may be a prayer offered for God’s

***The chaplain has always been one to share his “cape” in a time of need.***

<sup>1</sup> *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, (London: Caxton Publishing Company, 1912), 579.

strengthening and protection during the time of crisis. It may be the provision of support for the elderly woman who has just lost her husband and partner of several decades to a heart attack. It will always be that which is appropriate and timely to bring comfort and a presence of God's love during the intense time of a crisis.

## ***DEVELOPMENT OF FEDERATION OF FIRE CHAPLAINS***

Everything starts with a vision. In 1978 a vision became reality when the Fellowship of Fire Chaplains was started by a group of area Chaplains in Ft Worth, Texas, who met to join together and share ideas and thoughts with one another about Chaplaincy in the Fire Service. It was not long before the ideas and input from chaplains across the United States became the basis for the founding of the Federation of Fire Chaplains. From this beginning the Fellowship grew and in 1991 adopted a constitution and changed its name to the Federation of Fire Chaplains.

The Federation of Fire Chaplains is incorporated as a non-profit professional organization by the "Articles of Incorporation" dated June 15, 1992. The purpose of this organization is to bring together individuals and groups who are interested in providing effective chaplaincy for fire service organizations. To fulfill this purpose the Federation and its membership exchange and share ideas and concerns which influence the quality of life of all members of the fire service and their families. These shared ideas and concerns should encourage and assist each one to develop the most noble of all human characteristics, service to others and to God, our Supreme Chief.

To become a member of the Federation of Fire Chaplains an individual must demonstrate (1) they are duly appointed by a fire service organization as Chaplain and (2) they are recognized as qualified for this special ministry by their respective denominational authority.

The Federation of Fire Chaplains recognizes there are other individuals who support the purpose of the Federation and an associate membership is available for these individuals or organizations.

The Federation is composed of Chaplains from volunteer, and paid departments who most often fall into three Categories: (1) Local Clergy who volunteer their time for the fire department, (2) firefighters who serve as Chaplains along with their other duties in the department and (3) firefighters who are full-time, paid Chaplains. As an added benefit to members, the Federation began the "Fire Chaplains' Institute" which offers specialized training to Chaplains in the areas of Effective Chaplaincy Programs, Emergency Service Stress and Critical Incident Stress Management, Chemical Dependency, Employee



***Ideas and input from Chaplains across the United States became the basis for the founding of the Federation of Fire Chaplains.***

***The Fire Chaplains Institute offers specialized training to Chaplains.***

Assistance Programs, Family Life for emergency workers, and Grief and Loss in cases of Line of Duty Deaths and other losses. This training takes place at the Annual Federation of Fire Chaplains Conference/Seminar and Regional Area Meetings.

As Fire Chaplains, the work is not limited to the area of fire departments, firefighters, communities or victims of the devastating ravages of fire or other crisis happenings. We shall strive to help ease the sufferings of others wherever our paths shall lead. However, as a base for our work, we have chosen the nation's firefighters, the acknowledged world's most dangerous profession, and fire victims, whose suffering is that most beyond description.

By providing an effective fire chaplain service, first within these areas, our work will achieve the goal of serving God and humanity. By the nature of their work, firefighters need the help provided by a thoughtful, caring and effective fire chaplains program. This, with God's help, is our purpose and we will strive to build.

## ***A BADGE OF HONOR***

The Federation of Fire Chaplains has adopted the Maltese cross as the background for their patch and for their badge. The reason for this is the Maltese cross is the Badge of the Firefighter. The Maltese cross is a symbol of protection; A Badge of honor; and its story is hundreds of years old.

When a courageous band of crusaders, known as the Knights of St. John fought the Saracens for possession of the Holy Land, they encountered a new weapon unknown to European warriors; it was a simple, but a horrible device of war. It wrought excruciating pain and agonizing death upon the brave fighters for the cross. The Saracens' weapon was fire.

As the Crusaders advanced on the walls of the city, they were struck by glass bombs containing Naphtha. When they became saturated with the highly flammable liquid, the Saracens hurled a flaming torch into their midst. Hundreds of the Knights were burned alive. Others risked their lives to save their brothers in arms from dying painful, fiery deaths.

Thus, these men became our first "firemen", and the first of a long list of courageous fire fighters. Their heroic efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded each hero a badge of honor; the cross, similar to the ones firemen wear today. The Knights of St. John lived for close to four centuries on a little island in the Mediterranean Sea name Malta. The cross came to be known as the Maltese cross.

The Maltese cross is a symbol of protection. It means the fireman who wears this cross is willing to lay down his life for you. Just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for others so many years

***By the nature of their work, firefighters need the help provided by an effective fire chaplain program.***

***The Maltese cross is a symbol of protection.***

ago, the Maltese cross is a Fireman's badge of honor, signifying they work just a step away from death with courage.

It is an honor for a Chaplain to wear the Maltese cross and to serve the firefighters and rescue personnel in their community. The Maltese cross as the background for the Chaplain patch is inlaid with the initials of the Federation of Fire Chaplains and Fire Department. In the next inner circle are in-laid two types of universal symbols. On the left the symbol for strength, the Oak leaf, on the right the symbol for peace, the Olive leaf. The branches of these leaves cross at the bottom of the circle signifying the continued effort of the Chaplain to help those they serve to maintain these balances in their life. The inner gold circle holds the image of a firefighter's helmet. The helmet signifies a covering of protection. A Chaplain wears the badge of the firefighters they serve. They also wear the symbol of the protective covering of God circled by their strength of character and purpose; a patch standing for peace with God, peace of mind, of will and emotions. The word Chaplain is in the bottom of the inner circle. The Federation of Fire Chaplains has chosen this logo for the symbol of their mission to the emergency workers of the world. Wear it proudly; serve it with humility and integrity.

The Federation of Fire Chaplains, through the years, has recognized the fact a Chaplain is often in a formal public position, sadly many times at memorial services for Line of Duty deaths, but, more often in meetings with fire service organizations and public ceremonies. The standard for the dress or class-A uniform for Chaplains of the Federation of Fire Chaplains is a black uniform, double breasted with gold buttons. On the sleeves of the uniform are three stripes indicating the trinity and/or body, mind and spirit, and the thought of Three Bells. Above these stripes may be placed the religious symbol of an individual Chaplain's choice. The cap of choice is white. This has become a standard for many Chaplains in communities across America and is being adopted by Canada and other countries.



## ***A SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION***

The fire chaplain “serves those who serve” with spiritual support. This means the chaplain needs to be a person grounded in spirituality – a strong spiritual person – steeped in a personal faith. Chaplain ministry is not about making people feel good. It is not about being a nice person, a helpful person, or a good person. It is not about “making converts”. It is about being a strong spiritual presence in difficult situations, bringing a type of “spiritual crisis intervention”.

Since members of the fire service and the victims of fire and disaster come from various religions and many different theological backgrounds, the chaplain needs to be prepared to serve all. It would

***The fire chaplain serves those who serve.***

***The chaplain need not compromise his or her own beliefs.***

be ideal if fire departments could have chaplains for every faith group represented in their community: a priest for the Catholics, a rabbi for the Jews, an imam for the Muslims, various protestant ministers, etc., but this is not very practical and usually not possible. Therefore, the fire chaplain must be ready to serve all faith groups with no conditions or reservation. The chaplaincy is non-denominational and non-sectarian. At the same time, the chaplain need not compromise his or her own beliefs and convictions. On an emergency scene, the chaplain provides the “spiritual crisis intervention”, providing stability, and then refers to the appropriate spiritual leader or resource (priest, rabbi, minister, etc.).

***A ministry of presence.***

In order to meet the diverse spiritual needs of firefighters and crisis victims, the chaplain will need to develop a ministry of “presence”. The Buddhists have a dictum; “Don’t just do something, stand there.” This can be confusing to those who are accustomed to action. It does not mean the chaplain does nothing, but rather that he or she becomes “aware” of self and surroundings. When the chaplain becomes fully present others, he or she is able to sense sacredness and communicate that awareness back. Being totally aware is a matter not only of hearing the words, but of understanding the heart as well. It takes disciplined awareness and patient endurance to be present. Being present is as courageous as it is difficult, because much of what the minister is present to in his or herself and in others is not pleasant. It is no picnic being present to those who are tired, scared, confused, grieving, injured, or dying. It is much easier to “do something” for them or provide a “stock” religious phrase than it is to really be present to them. For the fire chaplain, regardless of religious theological background, there is no substitute for simply “being there” – a real ministry of presence.

***The chaplain’s gift to others is hope.***

In times of crisis, the chaplain’s gift to others is hope. While the chaplain may seldom use the word hope itself, his or her presence will communicate the thought more effectively than any spoken phrase. The chaplain’s presence says somebody cares, somebody loves. This caring and service is enhanced by a variety of specialized skills and techniques that the chaplain strives to master. Many of these skills and techniques are taught through the Fire Chaplain’s Institute and included in this manual.



# PERSONHOOD OF THE FIRE CHAPLAIN

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*Steve and his wife Debbie have been married since 1976 and have three surviving daughters; Brittany, Jennifer, and Samantha.*

The fire chaplain can come from many different backgrounds and may approach the ministry from several angles. A local pastor will have their own emphasis in the fire chaplaincy, while a firefighter serving as chaplain may stress different parts of the work. Whether the chaplain is a minister, lay person, firefighter, paramedic, paid, or

volunteer, there are some things about the work and position of fire chaplain that will always be the same and are common to all of the above.

*Some things about fire chaplaincy are common to all settings.*

For many involved in ministry the saying “it is not who you are but whose you are that is important” is a critical frame of reference. It refers to the fact that the minister is a servant of God and belongs to His kingdom. It is certainly true that the work of the chaplain is the work of serving God. There are several critical personhood issues that can either allow God to work effectively through the chaplain or can prevent that effective work from happening.

Since most fire chaplains are serving in dual (or more) roles as pastors, firefighters, etc., the challenge of balancing the roles and responsibilities of these differing and sometimes conflicting commitments is very real. If the pastor allows his or her place as a volunteer chaplain to overshadow the commitment to church and congregation, a strained relationship may develop. If the firefighter begins to spend more time in his or her role as chaplain than the job they are paid to do, the result can be loss of credibility, or even employment! The final balance that must be maintained is that of family. This chapter will explore all of these issues and give some tips on maintaining balance in ministry.

## ***FOCUS FOR THE FIRE CHAPLAIN***

*Who does the fire chaplain represent?*

Serving as a Chaplain to the Fire Service is a tremendous privilege and as Peter Parker’s uncle keeps reminding him, “With great privilege comes great responsibility.” The chaplain needs always to be aware that he or she is representing not only God, but also his or her local church, denomination or fellowship, the authorizing agency as well as all other Fire Chaplains. This might explain why the turnout coat and helmet can be heavy at times. While there is great opportunity for God to be praised by our actions, there are also many ways the chaplain can mess up. Ultimately, the chaplain must realize that he or she serves at the pleasure of the Chief of Chiefs.

The fire fighters that the chaplain minister to are special people. While every sane person is running away from a disaster, they are running towards it. Since they are different from general population, it follows that those who serve as their chaplains must be different as well. There are some important characteristics and personality qualities the fire chaplain should strive to develop.

## **BE SUBMITTED TO GOD**

The first quality every chaplain must possess is complete submission to God. Open to His call, willing to follow wherever He may lead, no matter how difficult the path may seem. At first glance, chaplaincy may seem to be just another type of service, but what it will

become is a place where God grows and matures the one serving. As a teenager, I attended a Youth Rally where the speaker told us that giving your life to God was giving him a signed blank check where he would fill in whatever amount he decided. In many ways, the emergencies chaplains respond to are like their personal burning bushes. And, like Moses, chaplains are called to leave their old way of life to follow God's call.

Submission to God means spiritual growth, and spiritual growth means change, and change never comes easy. In chaplaincy God is calling the server to move from a shallow life of religious activity to a deeper spiritual relationship with him and others. Spiritual maturity allows one to be more accepting of diverse ways to express faith, to understand that their way is not the only way. The only way to this maturity is to be a student of the Word.

Submission also involves availability. More than anything else, this defines the chaplain; he or she is one who is available, who will answer the tones. This means a willingness to get out of the office and out into the world where service can be rendered. Think of all the interruptions in Jesus' life and of the way he responded to those interruptions. He was not bothered or put out by them. He saw them as opportunities to serve and glorify God. Perhaps he saw them as moments when God was acting as his appointment secretary. Perhaps life would be more effective if God's children all started letting God set their schedules.

Submission involves trust. Trust, that God will accomplish what he wants done through His servants. Chaplains are called into situations where they do not know the people, their history, their worldview or anything else about them. Chaplains come into people's lives in the midst of a crisis representing a God that the people may or may not believe in and whom they may be very angry with. In addition, the expectation is that somehow the chaplain is going to "fix" the situation. The only way anyone can succeed in those circumstances is to trust that God will do what he wants done through them and then to yield to letting Him work through them. Times of absolute failure have been when the chaplain goes in thinking he or she has all the answers and boy were these people lucky they had such a chaplain. As Proverbs 16:18 says, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." The truth of that verse has been proved too many times. James shows the way when he says, "Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10) One of the great privileges chaplains have is going into a situation without a clue of what to do to help and then let God use them, seeing his great power. A personal chaplaincy illustration reinforces the point.

I remember one situation where God just totally amazed me. It had been a busy week and I was getting ready to go on a trip and one of the members of my congregation was having

***Chaplaincy becomes a place where God matures the one serving.***

***The expectation may be that the chaplain has all the answers!***

***One of the great privileges is going into a situation without a clue of what to do.***

surgery the next day at about the time my plane was leaving. I confess that my attitude about the situation was not what it needed to be. This person was one who was always speaking out about how beneficial aroma therapy and other alternative treatments were and yet she was constantly getting sick with this thing or the other. Now, as I was rushing to leave pack and take care of all the things that needed to get done before I could get away, she was in the hospital facing brain surgery to remove a tumor that was pressing on her brain stem causing some paralysis. To be honest, I am ashamed to admit that I was a little peeved that she had finally come down with something serious, that all her worries had finally been fulfilled. The doctor had laid out all the possible outcomes and she was expecting to be hospitalized for several weeks and was not hopeful about the paralysis being reversed.

As I walked down the hospital hallway, I asked God to forgive me for my bad attitude and to give me something to say that would help her deal with the surgery because I really did not know what I was going to say. I was worn out and empty. As I opened the door every face turned my way with a look of thankfulness and expectation that I knew I did not deserve. I walked over to the patient's bedside. I leaned down, took her hand and said, "We talk about having God in our hearts, but we know that he is most likely in our minds. So, where the doctors are going tomorrow, God is already there." I saw peace and understanding come into her face, but I was the one most moved by those words, because more than anyone else in that room I knew that those words had come from God, that they were not mine. The surgery went great and she was home three days later with no after effects and she was telling everyone what I had said to her and how it had made all the difference in the world. After I returned home the next week, I could not let her think that those words came from my wisdom, so I went and told her the whole story which simply increased her awe of what God had done for her.

Chaplains are so blessed to see God at work. But, it only happens when one humbly yields themselves to go where there is need and then let God do what he wants done in that situation.

*Avoiding  
"ecclesiastic  
aloofness"*

## **BE REAL**

There is no place in chaplaincy for what might be called the Politician/Clergy, those clergy who adopt a persona of "clergy hood". They have an ecclesiastic aloofness that seems to be erected as a wall around who they really are. The average church attendee may accept or even expect it, but it won't get you very far in the firehouse.

Firefighters are risk takers and they need chaplains who will risk being real with them. They need to see that chaplains are just people like them, with personal struggles. Chaplains need to model vulnerability and openness with firefighters. Chaplaincy is about tearing down the walls that separate people from one another. As Paul said to one of his congregations, “We have...opened wide our hearts to you.” (2 Corinthians 6:11 NIV) Chaplains too, need to open wide their hearts to the firefighters they serve.

## **BE BILINGUAL**

Being bilingual means speaking a language other than one’s native tongue. It is always helpful for a chaplain to be able to converse in other languages. Even with working with people who speak English as a second language, the chaplain will make them feel much more at ease if they can converse in the person’s primary language. In the context of fire chaplaincy, the meaning of being bilingual has to do with a different use of the English language. The fire service has a language of its own in which the fire chaplain *must* become fluent. Every profession has its own jargon. There are certain terms and phrases that will show whether one is an insider or an outsider. Even churches have their own insider talk. If chaplains expect to be accepted by the fire fighters, we need to learn to talk their language. And more than that, we need to learn how to communicate spiritual truth in non-religious language.

*The fire service has a language of its own that the chaplain must become fluent in.*

Becoming proficient in “fire department language” normally comes with prolonged exposure to the conversation. Just as a Spanish student would be forced to learn when living in Mexico City, a fire chaplain will learn by spending time in and around the fire service. Chaplains that come from a firefighting background will have a definite advantage in this area. Chaplains entering the ministry from outside the fire service will need to spend time and effort to learn. It is not as hard as it may seem. If the chaplain concentrates on building relationships with firefighters, the firefighters will be happy to bring the chaplain “inside”. It is important to remember that along with the language comes the culture. It is true with Spanish speakers and it is true with firefighters. Learning the culture means becoming immersed in it and that just takes time.

## **BE CALM**

A huge part of what chaplains do is summed up by the phrase, “ministry of presence.” That is, chaplains are the presence of God in the lives of everyone they deal with. Chaplains need to exhibit that “peace that passeth understanding” and be the calm at the center of the

storm. To paraphrase Kipling; If you can keep your head when all about you are losing theirs...then you are a chaplain.

*Calmness does not oblivion to one's surroundings.*

This calmness comes from experience, so new chaplains need to get all they can as fast as they can. They will need to go on as many calls as they can just to get used to the sights, sounds and smells. The more experience they get the greater their situational awareness will become. Experience will teach the chaplains how to be fully aware of everything that is going on around them, enabling them to remain safe, while focusing on the needs of those they are ministering to. Calmness is not oblivion to one's surroundings. That can be very dangerous on an emergency scene. Instead, calmness is cool, collected, and focused in the midst of what may appear to the public as chaos.

## ***ACCOUNTABILITY OF THE FIRE CHAPLAIN***

Most fire chaplains will operate by themselves on scene. Even if they are a part of a chaplain team, most calls require the response of a single chaplain. The chaplain will often respond to the call alone, do the ministry alone, and clear the scene at different times than the rest of the responders. All of this, though true for most, does not mean that the chaplain operates outside of a system of accountability. Here the accountability of the chaplain will be described under the headings; "Vertical", "Horizontal", and "Legal/Ethical".

### **VERTICAL**

*How can a chaplain keep accountability?*

Chaplains have at least two governing authorities to which they are accountable. First is accountability to our Creator. Every chaplain must decide and constantly keep in mind that he or she is representing and is accountable to God for the work done in emergency services. Having another trusted individual to assist in keeping this accountability can be very helpful. Many chaplains use co-workers or small groups which meet regularly as accountability partners to keep check on their work and ministry. Then there is the accountability we have to the Fire Chief and the civil authorities he or she represents. While we acknowledge that God is the supreme authority, He doesn't have the legal exposure that our departments and communities take on. Chaplains must be very careful that everything they do is in accordance with department regulations and commonly accepted practices to protect everyone involved from lawsuits. A preemptive visit with administrators, city or county attorneys, or human resource specialists can help the chaplain avoid problems later.

## **HORIZONTAL**

Fire Chaplains also have the reputations of their families, their faith communities and their fellow chaplains to protect. Reputation is the greatest potential asset or detriment a chaplain can have. If reputation is lost or tarnished due to improper behavior or inadequate performance, it may never or only after long effort, be recovered. Wise chaplains will utilize firefighters and administrators whom are trusted and well known to help evaluate reputation. What is actually being talked up and overheard in the apparatus bay is always more reliable than the chaplains own self-view.

*What is being overheard in the apparatus bay is always more reliable than the chaplain's self-view!*

## **LEGAL/ETHICAL**

Every chaplain should be aware of the confidentiality regulations that apply to their own ordination and whatever license they may have. While the legal issues of confidentiality are important, practically speaking, the issues of professional and interpersonal integrity are of greater concern. Loose lips will not only sink ships, they will torpedo a chaplaincy. Confidential information and private conversations need to be kept private or chaplains will soon find themselves closed out from the fire community they are trying to serve.

## ***BALANCING ROLES***

There are very few chaplains who serve full time in their capacity with the fire department. Most models for fire chaplaincy utilize someone who works full or part time as a minister or firefighter and part time or volunteer as chaplain. Whether the fire chaplain role is shared with work as a parish minister, firefighter, paramedic, department administrator, or other job, finding balance between demanding positions can be challenging.

## **PASTOR VS. FIRE CHAPLAIN**

When it comes to balancing roles as Pastors and Fire Chaplains the seduction of the emergency services must be taken into account. Seduction is the right word as the emergency services can be a harsh mistress who will dominate time and energy at the expense of church and pastorate if one gives in to her charms. The Fire department can be everything that the church isn't. Flashing lights, sirens, the excitement, uniforms, badges and the adrenalin rush can all combine to make the church seem old and humdrum. It is very easy to forget that for those who are full time pastors and volunteer chaplains that the primary

*The seduction of emergency services must be taken into account.*

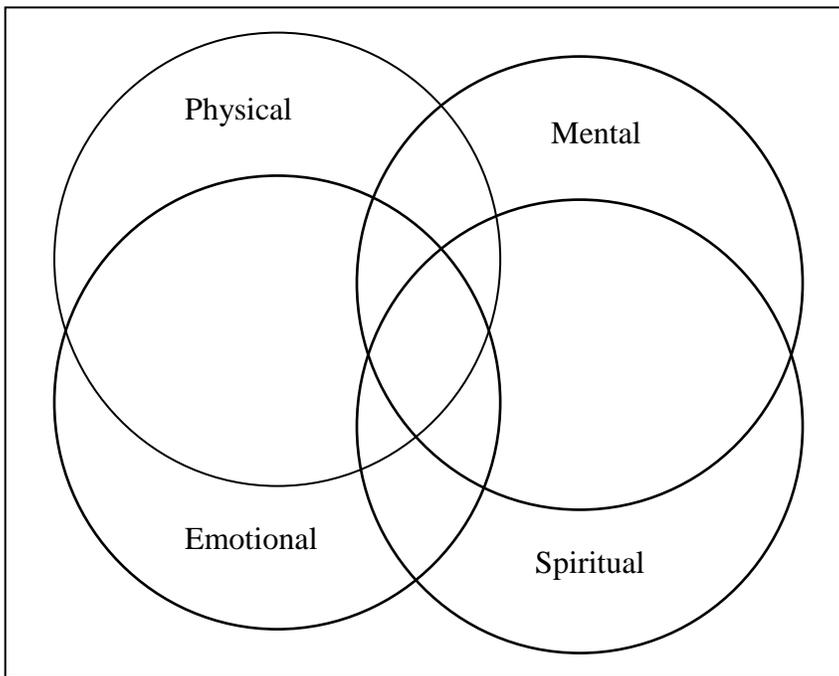
loyalty must stay with the church that is paying for services. It doesn't take a lot for the church to become jealous of the pastor's feelings for the chaplaincy. The old rule of good dating: "Dance with the one you brung" really applies to how one balances the roles. Constant monitoring of commitment of time and energy as well as paying attention to conversations with church members will help keep the church from feelings of jealousy and suspicion.

## **FIREFIGHTER VS. FIRE CHAPLAIN**

For the firefighter who also serves as a chaplain there are several issues that need to be noted. Co-workers are going to be watching and testing credibility. The chaplain's work ethic must leave no room for criticism. The chaplaincy is 24/7, but the chaplain must be careful not to push it in an offensive way. Selective listening and judicious reproofs are very critical. Integrity must be above reproach or there will be no approach as one Firefighter/Chaplain put it. Make sure the division of the two roles is clearly laid out in your department's Standard Operating Procedures.

## ***SELF-CARE FOR THE FIRE CHAPLAIN***

The diagram below represents different dimensions of humanity. All people have a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual dimension. Each of these parts makes up a total person. The reality of this model can be seen in the command to ““Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.” (Mark 12:30 NIV)



Sister Teresa McIntier, R.N., M.S. American Academy of Bereavement

This model represents the energy reservoirs that make up each person. They act like a series of interconnected batteries. Energy put into the system through any dimension will flow into the others until equilibrium is achieved. In the same way any dimension that experiences a drain will draw from all the others. For example, when someone gets the flu, it is a physical drain which also affects the mental and emotional dimensions. When someone gets the flu, they may stay home from work. But if they try to use that time to balance their check book, they won't have the concentration they need due to

the illness. They will also not have the emotional energy to be their normal happy self.<sup>2</sup>

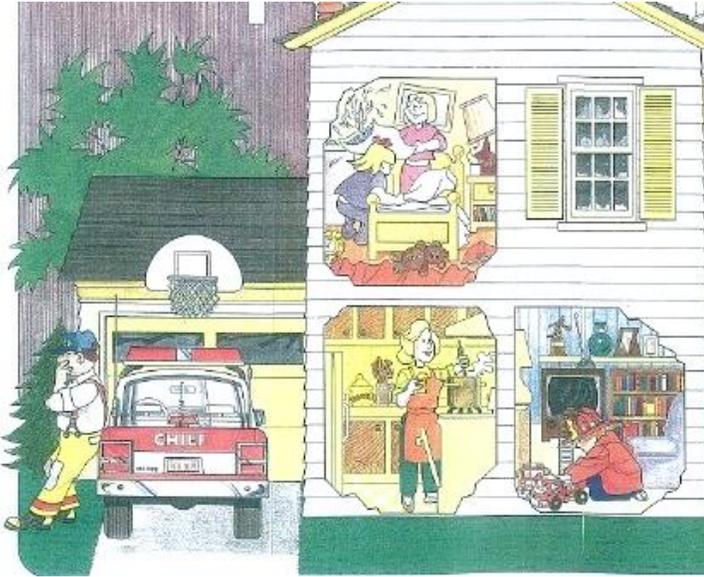
Each of the dimensions is energized in different ways; The physical through eating, sleep, hydration, and exercise, the mental through education, the breaking of old habits and doing routine tasks in a new way, The emotional through giving and receiving love, The spiritual through worship.

In order to be effective chaplains, need to take care of themselves. This model can help illustrate when one's life is getting out of balance. Watch for disturbances in each of the dimensions which will show that they are being drained of energy. In the physical dimension watch for changes in appetite (not eating or eating too much), and sleep patterns or a loss of physical energy. In the mental dimension changes will be seen in forgetfulness, loss of concentration, depression, and lack of will power. In the emotional dimension one should watch for signs of detachment and withdrawal. Anger is the most recognizable problem in the spiritual dimension. Seeing any of these symptoms indicates it is time to take a break and spend some time reenergizing appropriately.

***Watch for indicators of problems in each dimension.***

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<sup>2</sup> Sister Teresa McIntier. In a presentation by the American Academy of Bereavement.



# FIRE CHAPLAIN MINISTRY TO FIREFIGHTERS

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*William and his wife Bobbie have three daughters and live in West Richland, Washington.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Throughout the fire service, chaplain models differ in organization and function. Some focus on service to the firefighters. Other chaplain programs may focus on service to fire and other emergency victims and their families. Many chaplain models include both of these ministry opportunities.

The chaplain who ministers primarily to firefighters will come to know the department he or she serves quite well over time. The ministry may not be limited there however, since opportunity to minister to other emergency service workers or even other public agencies may arise. This section will focus on the ministry to firefighters.

***The combination of personality and work environment breeds a peculiar “fire culture”.***

Firefighters often share some common personality traits, and always share the unique job surroundings created by emergency service. This combination of personality and work environment breeds a peculiar “fire culture” that is common to fire departments everywhere. It is a culture that is taken for granted within fire service, but not usually recognized by the general public. For the chaplain who is tasked with ministering to firefighters, understanding the fire personality and fire culture is a priority need. As in many mission fields, we must understand those to whom God has appointed us before we can know how to minister to them.

## ***WHO IS THE FIREFIGHTER?***

Firefighters are special people in many ways; they have special personalities, use special equipment, have special training, and face special situations. On a daily basis they are intimately involved in situations that few people ever even see in a lifetime. Even though death and destruction become a regular part of their routine, the firefighter also remains a human being who is susceptible to the effects of this exposure.

Any person’s characteristics are formed by a combination of factors. A doctor may be described by elements that include her professional surroundings, her personality, and her family life. His training and his work as well as his personality will affect a soldier’s personhood. Similarly, several factors work in combination to form the description of a firefighter. Here we will concentrate on personality factors, faith factors, and job stress factors.

## PERSONALITY FACTORS

As in any profession, a mixture of personality types and characteristics can be found within any particular fire department. However, it has been found that career and volunteer firefighting tend to draw a majority of like personality types. It has been noted “people who choose a career with inherent powerful stressors have personalities that match them to the work, or they would find it intolerable.”<sup>3</sup> Studies from the last decade have shown that emergency service workers have very different personalities from the average person who has a less dangerous job.<sup>4</sup>

*People who choose to work in a career with powerful stressors have personalities to match the work.*

### PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS OF FIREFIGHTERS

Need to be in control  
 Obsessive (desire to do a good job)  
 Compulsive (tend to repeat the same actions for similar events; traditional)  
 Highly motivated by internal factors  
 Low motivation from external sources  
 Action oriented  
 High need for stimulation  
 Need for immediate gratification  
 Easily bored  
 Risk takers (thrill seekers in recreational activity)  
 Rescue personality  
 Highly dedicated  
 Strong need to be needed

Firefighters are more interested in details than people in other professions. They tend to set very high personal standards, take pride in a perfect job, and become very frustrated when they experience failure. This detail and motivation help them to be good firefighters, but also set them up for the stress that comes with failure to achieve their own high standard. Firefighters are usually action oriented and quick decision makers, working well under pressure. Since they are easily bored, they would usually choose to be on the scene of a disaster rather than sitting around a station doing nothing. They face the dangers of their work such as burning buildings, injured and sometimes violent people, and twisted wreckage with a calm attitude.

<sup>3</sup> Jeffery T. Mitchell, Ph.D., and Grady Bray, Ph.D., *Emergency Services Stress* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1990) 19.

<sup>4</sup> J. T. Mitchell, “Living Dangerously: Why fire fighters take risks”, in *Firehouse Magazine*, 11(8): 51-53.

Even their recreation is dominated by dangerous play such as motorcycles, snowmobiles, mountain climbing, or other active, thrill-seeking activities.<sup>5</sup>

Many firefighters display extreme dedication to the work, often at the expense of family or their own health and wellbeing, even though they will usually voice their family as being a higher priority than their job. In reality, too many firefighters put job first, children second, and spouse third. Males married to female firefighters often have a harder time adjusting to this reality than females married to male firefighters.

## FAITH FACTORS

Emergency service workers often have a difficult time connecting with the organized church. This is true for many reasons. Rotating shifts or odd work schedules make attendance at regular meetings sporadic even for the most dedicated. Physical and emotional exhaustion due to job requirements can make engaging other people seem overwhelming. It can also happen that firefighters may learn things about the private lives of church members during their course of duty that make either the firefighter or the church member uncomfortable.

Firefighters, police officers, paramedics, and other emergency service workers sometimes find that continual exposure to death, crime, and destruction in their daily work causes them to develop a different worldview than those sitting next to them in church. The firefighter may see God's actions with His people far differently than someone who does not face death and loss on such an intimate, regular basis. The firefighter may be reserved in sharing some of his or her views with others in church, such as bible study groups, for fear of traumatizing them or shattering their faith. These factors combine to effectively separate the firefighter from the church, and sometimes from God. It is interesting that what could be the source for encouragement and refreshment instead often becomes an additional source of stress.

Most firefighters who are successful have a good internal reference, which for many may include their personal faith. A solid faith can help the firefighter to acknowledge and appreciate God's personal presence during times of crisis and disaster. Other characteristics of God such as His benevolence, grace, and mercy can also become very real in the life of a firefighter who is spiritually watchful in his or her daily work.

*Emergency Service workers often have difficulty connecting with the organized church.*

*A solid faith can help a firefighter acknowledge God's presence in crisis.*

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<sup>5</sup> Mitchell, *Emergency Services Stress*, 20.

## JOB STRESS FACTORS

The third component that shapes the person of the firefighter is the stresses from the work he or she does. There are chronic stressors, intrapersonal stressors, interpersonal stressors, and critical incident stressors that all take their toll on the firefighter.

Chronic stressors are things that have been a part of our life for some time and we think we have become accustomed to them. For firefighters, shift work has consistently been identified as stressful. Shift work disrupts everything from biorhythms to family life. Most people who work shift work say they adjust to it but adjusting to it does not eliminate the inherent stress. Another less obvious stressor for firefighters is boredom. As mentioned above, the firefighter personality is action oriented, but sometimes firefighters and other emergency service personnel are required to spend a great deal of time waiting. Inactivity becomes a source of stress to a person who has a high need for stimulation. When the work is busy, the environment can include noise, hazardous materials, and repeated exposures to dangerous situations that can all add to the chronic or daily stress load.

Intrapersonal stressors occur when we are not living our lives the way we believe we should.<sup>6</sup> A firefighter may think that he or she should be at a certain rank or income level. If they are working below that level, stress will result. This is a stress that originates and multiplies within us. Here is where personal beliefs and values that may conflict with reality become a source of additional stress.

Interpersonal stress is that which occurs due to conflict with other people. Opportunities for this stress abound in the fire service. Close living quarters for extended time periods, heavy dependence on each other for life threatening issues, strong competition for advancement, and frequent public scrutiny all lend their stress to the relationships of firefighters.

During the course of responding to calls, the firefighter will occasionally face the situation that overwhelms their own usual coping ability. When this occurs, an acute stress reaction, or critical incident stress may occur. Remember, not all severe emergency calls or even disasters will induce an acute stress response in firefighters. Veteran firefighters have developed coping abilities that are different than those of the average person. Some examples of incidents that may lead to critical incident stress are:

- ❖ Death or serious injury to a co-worker in the line of duty
- ❖ Large disaster response
- ❖ Personal threat to firefighter from a violent person
- ❖ Traumatic death or serious injury to infants or young children

***Interpersonal and Intrapersonal stressors.***

***Some incidents can lead to critical incident stress.***

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<sup>6</sup> Mitchell, *Emergency Services Stress*, 27.

- ❖ Incident with excessive media coverage
- ❖ Working on a victim who is a relative or close friend
- ❖ Suicide of a fellow worker
- ❖ Death of a civilian caused by firefighter operations

Some critical incidents may affect only a portion of a fire crew, other incidents may have the impact to cause a stress reaction in all involved. An acute stress reaction is an ordinary response to an extraordinary event; it does not indicate a weakness or problem in a firefighter. The response may, however, carry symptoms that make the firefighter and those around him or her become concerned. Symptoms of acute stress include physical, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and

## Signs and Symptoms of Distress

### PHYSICAL

Nausea  
Excessive sweating  
Tremors  
Increased heart rate  
Dry mouth  
Elevated blood pressure  
Chills  
Vision problems  
Fatigue

### EMOTIONAL

Anxiety  
Anger  
Survivor guilt  
Fear  
Feeling overwhelmed  
Feeling numb  
Denial  
Feeling hopeless  
Worried

### COGNITIVE

Confusion  
Calculation difficulty  
Memory problems  
Poor concentration  
Seeing an event over and over  
Distressing dreams  
Disruption in logical thought  
Blaming someone

### BEHAVIORAL

Withdrawal  
Suspiciousness  
Increased or decreased appetite  
Excessive humor  
Increased smoking  
Increased alcohol intake  
Excessive silence  
Change in personal interaction

### SPIRITUAL

Questioning personal faith  
Unsurety of worldview  
Anger with God  
Bargaining with God  
Withdrawal from spiritual support  
Spiritual skepticism  
Hopelessness

even spiritual manifestations. Common symptoms are listed in the table<sup>78</sup>.

This list is not exhaustive but should communicate that stress can be a very strong factor in the life of a firefighter. Usually a firefighter may display a few symptoms from each category during a stress reaction. The presence of many symptoms together may indicate a more severe stress reaction. There are also some signs and symptoms which require immediate corrective action. These include, but are not limited to; chest pain, breathing difficulty, cardiac arrhythmia, hyper alertness, and disorientation, serious slowed thinking, panic reactions, shock-like state, general loss of control, antisocial acts, and phobic reactions. A more complete listing of signs and information is available in the materials listed in the recommended reading at the end of this chapter. Numerous tools exist to help firefighters deal with these symptoms that will be discussed later in this chapter. Regardless of the tools or approach used, it is important for the chaplain to understand “where a firefighter is coming from” and why he or she may display unusual behavior.

***A complete class on Critical Incident Stress is recommended for all fire chaplains, and required for advanced certification.***

## ***WHERE DOES THE FIREFIGHTER LIVE AND WORK?***

It doesn't take long for anyone who is around firefighters to realize that a special culture exists within the fire service that is found very few other places. The characteristics of this culture are most obvious at and around the fire station, but also carry beyond the walls to family life and recreation. Even outside of local boundaries, an unequalled camaraderie exists among firefighters wherever one goes. Firefighters often refer to this culture as the “fire family”, a term which describes the decidedly joined group in any fire department. Contributing to this culture are the personality factors discussed above as well as factors derived from the work environment and requirements of firefighting.

***A special culture exists within the fire service.***

## **FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE FIRE CULTURE**

People with similar interests and skills will often find each other and build friendships based on their commonality. Some will even seek out others like themselves by forming or joining clubs and

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<sup>7</sup> George S. Everly, and Jeffery T. Mitchell, *Critical Incident Stress Debriefing* (Ellicott City, MD; Chevron Publishing, 1993), 27.

<sup>8</sup> William F. Lotz, *Emergency Service Chaplain Training for Ministers* (San Francisco, CA; A Doctor of Ministry Project for Golden Gate Theological Seminary, 1999).

organizations that include things they like. Bicycle clubs attract those who like to ride. People who enjoy reading join book groups. In a similar manner, the fire service tends to attract people with some like characteristics. It is only natural then, that such a collected group of individuals would form a rather tight knit “family.”

The nature of the work performed by firefighters requires that a squad of individuals perform as a team. Achieving the goal of suppressing a fire or rescuing an injured victim almost always requires several people to perform their assigned tasks in harmony with one another. Even in daily duties, a firefighter’s safety will often depend upon the seamless operation of his workmates as a team. In fact, often an individual’s very life is dependent on teamwork. In light of this it is not surprising to notice a family atmosphere within a fire department. Also, of note is that, like a family, the members may be in harmony with one another or at odds with each other any time.

*Like a family, firefighters may be in harmony or at odds with each other.*

The family theme carries itself outside of the station as well. Many firefighters will choose fellow workers as their hunting and fishing partners or golf buddies. Whatever the leisure activity, it is normal to find a whole truckload of firefighters doing it together. A Family barbeque will often include not just the kids and spouse, but the kids and spouses of other firefighters as well. Some might assume that firefighters would have had enough of each other after working twenty-four shifts together, but many things explain the continued togetherness. In addition to the like personal interests mentioned above, the graphic, severe, and sometimes violent scenes dealt with by firefighters are difficult to share with the “un-ordained”, or non-emergency service people. Some firefighters use “black humor” as a stress coping mechanism; something certainly not understood by the general public. Sometimes dealing with the stress of the job means sharing thoughts and reflections with others who have experienced the same thing. Likewise, the spouse of a firefighter finds an understanding ear in another emergency services spouse.

Of course, the fact that most firefighters are required to live together also contributes to the family model. Career firefighters usually spend twelve to twenty-four hours at a time with each other regularly on their work shift. They not only work and train together during this shift, but also eat together, sleep together, watch TV and recreate together. This brings to light a difference between law enforcement and fire service noted by many chaplains who have worked with both. Police officers also depend on their partners for their very life. They train together and work as a team on incidents. The difference is that when a call is completed, the firefighters return to the station together and put the unit back in service together. The police officer completes an incident and returns to patrol by his or her self, alone. Police officers are alone a majority of the time, with only a

few things that cause them to draw together. Firefighters are together most of the time, with only a few things that draw them apart.

## ***WHAT ARE THE FIREFIGHTER'S NEEDS?***

All of the description included above, all of the personality factors, faith factors, and job descriptions combine to give the fire chaplain a picture of the needs of a firefighter. As the chaplain aims to minister to firefighters and their families, targeting the special needs will make the ministry valuable and viable. What are these special needs? What needs do firefighters have that others do not?

Individualized needs grow naturally from individuals. Let's look at the description of firefighters above and list some recognized needs that grow from who the firefighter is and where the firefighter works.

***Firefighter's needs are based on their personality, faith, and job.***

### **NEEDS BASED ON PERSONALITY**

We have determined that the firefighter personality includes the need to be in control. However, many of the situations faced by firefighters are beyond their control. Matters of life and death may be influenced by our emergency interventions but are ultimately beyond our control. This conflict within a firefighter can bring frustration and doubt. Also, the firefighter may experience situations in personal life over which he or she has far less control than the more routine work experiences. When home life seems "out of control" the firefighter will experience a great deal of turmoil. Often the turmoil at home has been brought on or inflamed by the firefighter's own extreme dedication to work at the exclusion or minimization of family.

The personal need to do a good job combined with the traditional tendency to repeat the same actions for similar events may make the firefighter appear ridged and inflexible to spouse and children. As family rebels from the compulsive behavior the firefighter reacts by falling back on his or her natural coping mechanisms, which include withdrawal and even more ridged behavior. As you can see, the home situation can spiral quickly into deeper and deeper difficulty. Robert Smith, Ph.D., describes this tension between firefighting and home life as "two separate systems in a constant struggle for balance and well-being."<sup>9</sup> Smith says, "The fire department family has a

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Smith, Ph.D., "How to Balance the Two Families of Firefighting" in *Fire Chief* magazine, Feb 2002.

unique stress, because it must coexist with the job in relative harmony to enable these two systems to function properly.”

Other personality factors may combine to cause special needs for the firefighter. How might the strong need to be needed fit with a family that is forced to function on it's own during the long absences of firefighter shift work? How does the need for immediate gratification and being easily bored fit with spending time with a young mother and toddler children? It becomes obvious that the personality of a firefighter by itself can cause him or her to have special needs for ministry.

## **NEEDS BASED ON JOB FACTORS**

We have already noted that firefighter stress is made up of a combination of chronic or everyday stressors and critical incident, or acute stress. Just as these factors shape the person of the firefighter, they also determine some of the firefighter's special needs. Many firefighters have not developed a way to de-stress with their families and other off-job settings. Many firefighters do not know how to relate the events of their work to the rest of life, home, recreation, church, and family.

Some families have difficulty understanding and adapting to the loyal attitude of the firefighter toward his or her work. The dangers of the job will have an impact on the family. Smith notes “some spouses would rather not think about the potential dangers of the job... while others have learned specifics about the firefighter's job to be more comfortable with their fears.<sup>10</sup>” Some firefighters might be under even more stress at work because of pressure from those at home who do not share the devotion to the work.

The nature of firefighting causes the firefighter to learn to depend on others from his team for everything. Perhaps because of this, firefighters tend to seek out other firefighters for personal help and will shun mental health professionals more than the general public would.

The graphic nature of the things seen in a tour of duty brings about a fraternity among those who share the experience. Hence, anyone who does not share the experience is not a part of the fraternity and will be hard pressed to become a part of the support mechanism for the firefighter, including spouse, children, parents, pastor, and counselor. The firefighter may need a well-rounded support team but limits his or herself to other firefighters. This theme carries on to the church setting where firefighters often have difficulty relating to other church members. The firefighter may have learned things about church members in the course of their duty that cannot or should not be shared, or the firefighters own experience may be overwhelming for

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<sup>10</sup> Smith, *How to Balance the Two Families of Firefighting*, pg1.

the church member. Just sitting in a Sunday school class or other small group may be a challenge for the firefighter because of these and other job-related issues.

The types of needs will be as varied as the causes. Spiritual needs will abound and can certainly be the target of the fire chaplain as he or she ministers to the firefighter. What happens to the firefighter's world-view when repeatedly faced with people who are hurting? Can a firefighter's faith be shaken when he or she is forced to deal with the aftermath of human cruelty and thoughtlessness? Most people seldom summons the energy to tackle the big "why" questions of life. Firefighters must face these questions on a regular basis and form a faith that can stand when their views are challenged.

*Faith based needs permeate all areas of a firefighter's life.*

## ***HOW CAN THE CHAPLAIN MINISTER TO THE FIREFIGHTER?***

Fire Department Chaplaincy is a multi-faceted ministry that will afford opportunities for the chaplain to relate to fire personnel at many levels. The chaplain will need to learn to relate to the department as a whole and to individuals within the department. Building a ministry to a fire department will require the chaplain to be there during times of crisis and during the routine that occupies much of a firefighter's time. Included here are six suggestions for effective ministry to firefighters. Each department and each chaplain program will present different ministry opportunities and will necessitate a slightly different approach. It is the challenge to each chaplain to find the unique opportunities in his or her department and define a ministry to meet the situation.

## **OPERATING IN A PARAMILITARY ORGANIZATION**

Most fire departments, whether staffed by paid or volunteer personnel, are run in a military fashion as far as organization is concerned. There is normally a clear delineation of rank among the personnel, and a respect for tenure within the ranks. This organization of people and resources is efficient for the department. It allows for smooth operation in crisis and in routine situations and is expandable or collapsible to fit needs. The model also fits the personality of most firefighters who tend to operate well in clearly defined strata.

The chaplain may not be as accustomed to functioning within the military model of rank and organization. Most churches are much more democratic in operation and people-centered in focus. The pastor, who is now acting as a chaplain, may be more used to group process than reporting to a superior. However, the chaplain who tries

to short cut the process will also short circuit his or her ministry potential.

*The chaplain who shortcuts the process may short cut ministry.*

In order to build a ministry, the chaplain will need to be able to have an informal relationship with firefighters. This comfortable relationship must take place, however, within the confines of the formality of a fire department. For the chaplain, this means learning procedures that apply, such as safety, protocols, the command structure, and reporting requirements. Everyone in a fire department is accountable to someone else. The chaplain will be no exception, which leads to the next factor.

## **THE COMMAND SYSTEM**

Fire departments will vary in their use of command structures, but most will approximate the following: a chief, assistant chiefs, battalion chiefs, captains, lieutenants, and firefighters. Officers with specific duties, such as a training officer, safety officer, or public information officer, will all fit into the chain of command at some point.

It is important that the fire chaplain learn where he or she fits (or doesn't fit) into the chain of command. Even more important, the chaplain must determine his or her relationship with each person in each level of the command system. Who will the chaplain report to during routine times? Often the chaplain does not have a formal place within the chain of command but responds to whoever makes a request. Sometimes the fire chief will want the chaplain to report directly to him or her. If this is the case, the chaplain will need to carefully guard confidentiality issues and will need to make it clear that issues discussed in private will stay private. If the firefighters ever think that something they shared with a chaplain is ending up on the chief's desk, the ministry will be severely crippled. Most chiefs will just want to know that the chaplain is responding to needs, without having to know the details of those needs.

*Where does the chaplain fit in the chain of command?*

If the chaplain has done a good job of identifying the levels of command, he or she can then develop a specific ministry within each of those levels. The needs of a chief or battalion leader will be different from the rookie firefighter, and the chaplain can be poised to respond to both effectively.

Ultimately the chaplain works for God, but the assignment from God to minister in the fire department may require that the chaplain have several "bosses." For many chaplains, the best situation for ministry occurs when trust is built with the administration allowing the chaplain to move freely about the ranks and minister appropriately in each.

## MAKING REGULAR CONTACT

The memorable and publicly noticed times for the firefighter occur during emergency responses. These, however, are normally few and far between. The bulk of a firefighter's shift is spent in routine activities, calls for service, and training. The chaplain, too, may look for the times of pronounced crisis when his or her services will be most visible and valuable. It is the routine times, however, that will provide the chaplain with the opportunity to build the relationships that will bloom in fruitful ministry at the right time.

In order to be trusted by fire personnel during a crisis, the chaplain will need to prove him or herself at other times. These proving grounds include, but are not limited to: training activities, meetings, drop-by visits at the station, special events, public meetings, and routine calls for service.

***Routine contact builds points for ministry.***

Training:	The chaplain may be able to take part in some training classes or field activities. This will develop needed knowledge of fire service, and build camaraderie between the chaplain and firefighters.
Meetings:	Chaplain presence during meetings may afford opportunity for ministry as well as provide exposure or "face time" where the firefighters get used to having the chaplain around.
Drop-By:	Most departments are open to having the chaplain drop by a station at any time just to "check in" with firefighters and build relationships. Meal times are often good for this or break times. Be careful not to abuse the hospitality and invade firefighter privacy. A call ahead is always advised.

Special Events:	Banquets, awards nights, retirements, parties, and other events will offer an opportunity for the chaplain to be involved with firefighters in a more social, relaxed setting. The chaplain may be able to offer an invocation, special prayer, be a speaker, or just attend.
Routine Calls:	If possible, it is often beneficial for a chaplain to respond not only on serious calls, but on a few routine calls as well. Here, he or she will have opportunity to interact with firefighters as they work and learn many department protocols and procedures.

In addition to these contacts in person, many chaplains make use of printed word to keep in touch with personnel. A monthly newsletter or “word from the chaplain” will often come as a welcome distraction for firefighters. The setting will determine how in depth, religious, humorous, and formal such communication should be. Regardless of the above, the chaplain should make sure the communication is professional and correct. Nothing sours credibility like mistakes, sloppiness, or misspelling in a communication.

***Possibilities for ministry are limited only by imagination and relationship!***

If the chaplain has some appropriate training or skills, it may be possible to offer in service training on topics of interest for firefighters. Past experience has had chaplains teaching firefighters classes in critical incident stress or lifetime stress management, sexual harassment, cultural sensitivity, working with the elderly or children, ethics, family skills, and many other topics of interest. Possibilities are limited only by a chaplain’s imagination and the relationships he or she has built (or failed to build) with the department.

## **CHAPLAIN AVAILABILITY**

***Credibility is built by prompt appropriate response.***

The success of a fire department will hinge on its ability to respond quickly and appropriately. Likewise, the ministry a chaplain develops with firefighters will grow or die dependent on the chaplain’s ability to respond to needs of firefighters quickly and appropriately. If the call is to respond alongside a fire crew and minister to crisis victims, the ministry must happen while the crisis is still going on. Credibility with fire personnel is built when the chaplain responds promptly to emergency calls.

Since firefighters are used to immediate response and have personalities that demand quick results, it is also important that the

chaplain respond to a firefighter's request for service in a timely manner. Often the window of opportunity to minister to firefighters may be narrow and limited by job demands and odd shifts of work.

Since many chaplains are pastors or firefighters themselves, it may be difficult to respond at a moment's notice to calls for service. Here is where the use of a team approach in Chaplaincy will save the ministry and the minister. Having more than one chaplain available to respond to emergency and other needs will ensure that ministry needs are met in a timely manner.

## **BEING A VALUABLE ASSET**

Some fire departments may have a strong record of chaplain relationships. Administrators, officers, and firefighters may already rely on the chaplain and understand the function of the chaplain within the department. Ministers in this situation will be able to step right in and pick up a significant ministry opportunity. However, many, perhaps even most fire departments will have no experience with a chaplain ministry. Even worse, a department may have had a bad experience with a chaplain who was not equipped for the ministry or had not developed the relationships within the department. In all situations, it is important for the chaplain, or chaplain team, to take on the responsibility of becoming a valuable asset to the department and the individuals within.

Exactly how a chaplain makes him or herself valuable will be dependent on the needs of the department and the skills of the chaplain. For example, if a chaplain has had training in Critical Incident Stress Management, a class or in-service training could be offered to the firefighters. This would give the chaplain a chance to be in front of everyone at once, establish credibility, and teach some valuable material. Just being around the station following particularly difficult calls and entering into reflections about the call while offering spiritual insights can provide a fertile place for relationship to grow and deposit value in the chaplain's ministry bank.

Even when the chaplain does not possess the particular skill needed for every instance, he or she can become a valuable resource person for firefighters. Many chaplains have established themselves as a valuable first point of contact for the firefighters in their department by simply knowing about all of the other resources available and learning how to make appropriate referrals. If a firefighter can trust the chaplain to either answer the question or find someone who can answer it, why not always go to the chaplain first?

Whatever the chaplain uses to establish value, it must include a high level of professionalism. Career and volunteer firefighters spend a great deal of time and energy training to handle difficult situations as professionals. The fire chaplain needs to fit in by handling situations

***Be a "first contact" and good reference.***

and requests in a professional manner, knowing not only what to do, but why it should be done that way.

## **BEING A SOLID INFLUENCE**

*Personnel will trust the chaplain who has been proven “under fire.”*

In emergency and difficult surroundings, many people tend to “go to pieces.” Crisis is often defined as a situation that overcomes an individual’s ability to cope. Firefighters are accustomed to working around and with those who are experiencing crisis and have developed coping mechanisms that allow them to function smoothly under stressful circumstances. The fire chaplain, too, must be able to bring a calming influence into a crisis scene. This is necessary not only to be effectual in ministering to crisis victims, but also in earning the right to work alongside the firefighters. Firefighters will come to depend on the chaplain for solid counsel and trust his or her direction if the chaplain has been proven “under fire.”

The way a chaplain reacts in crisis situations can make or break the ministry to that department. Just as firefighters need to be able to depend on each other to act according to their training in emergency situations, the chaplain should be dependable and predictable in emergencies. The chaplain can provide a calming effect during emergencies by not being “rattled” emotionally or theologically in the midst of chaos. This means the chaplain will need to be prepared theologically for the “tough” questions that arise during these times (does not mean the chaplain needs to know all the answers). It means the chaplain will need to be able to develop personal coping mechanisms and personal stress debriefing practices. It also means the chaplain must keep a vital personal relationship with God being ready to allow God to minister through him or her at unexpected times and in surprising ways.

The effective fire department chaplain is much more than a local pastor who agrees to be put on a call list or a well-meaning firefighter who “takes his or her religion to work.” The fire chaplain may come from a background of ministry, firefighting, or some other area, but he or she will need to approach the fire Chaplaincy as a special calling to minister in very specific situations which will require training and certain ministry gifts. The fire chaplain ministry will not be for everyone, but for the person whom God has gifted and who has trained for the challenge; it will offer a rewarding opportunity to be God’s presence where God’s presence is desperately needed.



# FIRE CHAPLAIN MINISTRY TO CRISIS VICTIMS

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## ***INTRODUCTION***

***The ministry target may have blurred lines of description.***

In a pastoral or parish setting the congregation is usually clearly defined. Membership of a church is described by a role. The ministry area for a local parish may be bordered geographically. Even in missionary settings language, geography, people group, or some describable characteristic usually defines the focus group. For the fire chaplain, the ministry target is sometimes well defined, but may have blurred lines of description. For the chaplain ministering to the victims of emergency crisis, the target population is defined by whoever is experiencing an emergency at any given time. Since this group changes every moment, and includes people from all walks of life, it is difficult to put a handle on the “congregation”. There are, however, similar characteristics of all people who suffer loss and trauma that will be discussed here.

This chapter will focus on the chaplain’s ministry to the victims of fire and other emergency crisis. The material covered here will be brief and only introductory in nature. Ministry to crisis victims could have a complete training course all by itself. In fact, many ministers have now made this topic a theme for higher education studies.

***When people experience an emergency, their ability to cope may be overcome.***

When people experience an emergency crisis, their ability to cope is challenged and may be overcome, at least temporarily. It is during this time that a fire chaplain can provide intervention that is helpful for the victim’s recovery. This “window of opportunity” for ministry occurs during and immediately after the crisis event and requires the chaplain to be on-scene for effective intervention. The scope of this training will be limited to the on-scene intervention and ministry. First, we will discuss some general principles of on-scene ministry, and then we will look briefly at the specifics of fire scene and EMS scene ministry.

## **THE FIVE P’S OF ON-SCENE CRISIS MINISTRY**

***The role of the chaplain should be well defined and focused.***

During a crisis scene, emergency responders will have specific jobs, assigned tasks, and defined goals they are working towards. At the residential structure fire, the initial fire crew may be working toward a fast attack extinguishment, or perhaps search and rescue. In the medical trauma call, the paramedics will be working to stabilize and transport victims. The role of the chaplain, though not always tied directly to the roles of other responders, should also be well defined and the goals focused.

The “Five P’s” of on scene crisis ministry help to describe what the chaplain will try to accomplish during the window of ministry opportunity which occurs during and immediately following an emergency crisis. They are Presence, Perception, Provision, Prayer, and Perseverance.

## ***PRESENCE***

The ministry of presence is a key element in any chaplain ministry and certainly remains so in an emergency crisis scene. Defining presence is difficult since it involves not only the person of the chaplain, but also the person of the Spirit of God indwelling the chaplain. The ministry of presence involves not only the chaplain’s presence with the victims, but also the chaplain being in the presence of God. Brother Lawrence taught of the need to practice the spiritual discipline of being in the presence of God. If the chaplain is to be an effective presence to those in crisis situations, the awareness of God’s presence must become a natural discipline. If the chaplain is aware of the presence of God in the situation, then he or she will be able to represent God effectively to the victims of the crisis. This leads us to the ministry of presence with the emergency crisis victim.

When responding to an unfamiliar setting, such as a victim’s home, during an unwelcome situation, such as a heart attack, anxiety will build on the part of the responding chaplain as to what should be said or what can be done. Often the best answer to both of these questions is “nothing.”

If we assume that the chaplain’s response occurs during the initial stages of the emergency crisis (while the paramedics are still working, while the fire is still burning, etc.) the crisis victims will be in

***Make the awareness of the presence of God a natural discipline.***

### **Common Cognitive and Emotional Stress Reactions During Initial Phases of Crisis**

Panic	decreased alertness to surroundings
Hyper alertness	slowed thinking
Disorientation	change in speech patterns
Crying spells	violence
Poor memory	Lowered attention span
Withdrawal	guilt
Suspiciousness	wishing to hide
Feeling numb	excessive worry
general loss of control	angry outbursts
confusion	blaming
feeling hopeless	wishing to die
feeling lost	Difficulty making decisions

the early reaction phase to the event. This means that they will be in shock mentally and emotionally, and perhaps even physically. Their cognitive processes will be muddled and foggy and their short-term memory will be compromised. They may be emotionally charged, displaying anger or tears and wailing.

These facts should make the chaplain realize that regardless how wise and inspired his or her words to the victim are, the victim probably will not really “hear” them. If they do hear, the words may need to be repeated several times, and the crisis victim may not comprehend even simple ideas. Communication needs to be short, precise, and simply worded. Beyond verbal communication, however, is the communication of caring that comes from presence.

Without saying a word, the chaplain who responds to an emergency crisis can communicate God’s love, their own concern, and a sense of peace just by being there. Simply stated, the ministry of presence is *just being there!* Often just showing up is exactly what is needed. Let’s look at a hypothetical emergency crisis as an illustration. A middle-aged woman comes to visit her widowed father on the weekend. He does not answer his door, so she checks the garage to see if his car is there. Upon looking in the garage, she finds her father dead as a result of suicide by hanging. She calls 911 for help. First to arrive is a police officer who verifies the situation quickly, sets the woman down in the living room and asks her several questions. The officer goes outside when the paramedics arrive and shows them through the house to the garage where they verify the death, return to the living room, ask a few questions, convey their condolences and leave. The investigator comes in, looks around the house, asks the woman some questions and returns to the garage. The Coroner arrives, briefly talks with the woman and goes out to the garage. Eventually the funeral home crew arrives, asks their questions and removes the body from the garage. By this time at least a dozen people have come in, talked briefly with the woman, then left. All of the things done were necessary, all appropriate, but none came close to meeting the need of the secondary victim of this suicide, the man’s daughter, who just needed someone to *stay* with her. It would not have mattered what that person said or what that person did. The important thing to her would have been that they *stayed* there just for her.

Presence involves both the passive element of just being there mentioned above and an active element. Even the passive act may take energy on the part of the chaplain. Many chaplains are very action oriented and become uncomfortable with silence and inactivity. For these responders “just being there” can be hard work! The more active part of the ministry of presence includes listening and consoling.

Active listening during the first several minutes to hours of an emergency crisis will provide the chaplain with the information needed to formulate a plan of ministry with the victims. Using active

***Because of victim’s compromised reactions, communication becomes critical... and difficult.***

***JUST BEING THERE!***

listening techniques such as repeating back, summarizing, and rewording will not only help the chaplain gain important information, but will also help the victims understand what they themselves are feeling and experiencing in the midst of the crisis confusion. Before a victim can move on to what is happening next, they must get in touch with what is happening now.

In the first several minutes of the crisis, the chaplain will be tasked with gaining important information from the victims. What exactly happened? Who are the other victims? Do the victims have local family support? What about church support? Sometimes fire personnel may need medical history or other pertinent information. At the same time the need for this information occurs, the victim's ability to focus and recall details may be severely hampered by their stress response. Most chaplains have developed some good active listening skills in their ministry experience, however applying these skills in the midst of crisis could be likened to a good marksman shooting at a moving target. It takes extra concentration.

Active consolation on scene involves repeated assurance that the victims are doing OK. The range of "normal" reactions to an emergency crisis will often make people worry about themselves and each other as they experience the symptoms of acute stress. The chaplain cannot say that the situation will be OK. The situation may not be OK. The patient may die or already be dead. The fire may consume the entire house. But the chaplain can assure the victims that they will have support to make it through the crisis, and that they are reacting normally and acceptably (There is, of course, the rare situation when the victim is reacting outside of the norm and some other intervention may be needed).

***Active listening will provide what is needed to formulate a ministry response.***

***Reassurance that a victim is doing OK, not that it will be OK.***

## ***PERCEPTION***

The first thing a victim of emergency crisis may lose is his or her ability to cope. Along with this he or she will experience a lack of clarity in thinking, short-term memory loss, inability to concentrate and focus, as well as a myriad of other cognitive difficulties. Because of this, one of the most important things a chaplain can provide during the crisis period is clear, objective thinking. The chaplain's perception of several things during an emergency crisis can be very helpful to the victims.

First is the chaplain's perception of the magnitude of the situation. When one is in the middle of crisis, it often becomes all-consuming. A situation that is really quite temporal may seem very final and "as bad as it could ever get." The actions and words of the chaplain are not intended to minimize a significant event in the victim's life, but rather to help put things in a more realistic perspective. An example will help to illustrate this. A family is burned

***Chaplain's  
perception of  
magnitude.***

out of a single-family residence by a fire that has done major damage but not completely destroyed the home. After the fire is extinguished and the structure stabilized, the chaplain walks the family back into the house. The victims are overwhelmed with the blackness and destruction of their belongings and have trouble recognizing anything in the house. The family stands in the middle of a room where everything has been piled and covered by firefighters and comments that everything is lost. As the chaplain walks the family through to the kitchen, he opens a cabinet and calmly mentions that it appears the contents of the cabinet are all OK. As they enter a bedroom that is charred and soaked from water damage, the chaplain notes that the clothes inside the dresser will probably clean up OK. At this point the wife walks over to the closet and opens the door to find the contents have only received minor damage. The chaplain pulls a blackened picture off of the wall and notes that the actual photo inside the blackened frame may be salvageable. The husband immediately looks for and finds a photo album that was kept inside a drawer that seems to have weathered the fire. In the span of a few minutes the focus has been changed from “all is lost” to “let’s find something else that survived”.

Occasionally the chaplain’s perspective may surmise that the situation is more serious than the victims realize. An elderly man calls for an ambulance because of difficulty breathing. The chaplain is called in when the patient goes into respiratory arrest. The chaplain notifies the patient’s adult children who come to the hospital. The family has been through this drill several times before when the patient has been transported, treated at the hospital, and released to go home. This time the chaplain must help them to realize that the patient may not be returning home this time. Sometimes the magnitude is greater than realized by the victims.

***Chaplain's  
perspective of  
family's best  
interests.***

Secondly, the chaplain can also provide a perspective of the best interests of the family or other victims as a whole. During the crisis, a victim may not want to “bother” other family members or may want to “wait to see what happens” before making contact with other close local family. In some cases, this approach may be appropriate, but in many cases the chaplain can help to gather others around the primary victims who can be a helpful support network. In other cases, a victim may want to call a family member to give bad news when it might be best to wait. This could be the case of an elderly family member in bad health that is by his or herself. A personal visit with appropriate support would perhaps service better than a frantic phone call. In any of these situations it is important for the chaplain to use the listening skills mentioned above to determine what will be or will not be appropriate. The possibility of operating out of our own family history and conditioning should take second place to operating out of the victim’s own situation. For example, the chaplain may conclude,

from his or her own experience, that the presence of a brother during a crisis would be very helpful. However, if the victim's brother has been estranged from the victim due to past conflicts, his presence may not be beneficial at all!

A third perception of the chaplain can be that of others to be notified. This can carry on from the discussion above regarding contacting family and friends, and go further to contacting church, insurance, employers, landlords, etc. In any emergency situation there are a host of people and places to be notified. Some will be able to render assistance to the victims. For these, the sooner they are notified, the sooner they can go into action. Insurance companies, Red Cross, and other assistance organizations can be of great help, but may need some lead time to line up resources. Others being notified may not be of immediate assistance, but lack of notification can lead to further problems for victims. Employers will need to know that employees may not be in to work. Landlords will need to have appropriate information to care for property. Schools and other organizations may need to make other arrangements to cover the loss or absence of victims involved.

Fourth, the chaplain should always remain keenly aware of the victim's need for privacy. One of the immediate losses in most emergency crisis situations is that of privacy. In a fire situation the family may be out in the street with no clothing. In a medical emergency the home is suddenly filled with people who are there to help, but may not have been invited in at another time. News media will often approach victims with many questions regarding a victim's personal life. Fire, law enforcement, and other emergency responders will need to ask questions that otherwise would never be considered by victims. The chaplain can become a buffer in many of these instances by keeping the privacy and dignity of the victims in mind at all times. A simple warning that news media is on the scene and may come to talk to victims will give the victims a chance to decide if they want to be interviewed or not. Standing so as to shield victims from prying video cameras, or positioning victims in places that are not easily accessible to uninvited guests can be a great service. Sometimes in the course of visiting with victims, the chaplain will learn private information. It may become an ethical and legal decision on the part of the chaplain to decide what to share with others.

Last, the chaplain may have an insightful perception of the physical needs of the victims. This may include needs for fire victims who are out in the cold in the middle of the night. It may be the transportation of a family member to the hospital whose loved one has gone by ambulance. While crews work to extinguish a house fire, the chaplain may notice that a victim has taken in considerable smoke and should be seen by a doctor or medic. Because of the close contact with

***Chaplain's perspective of people to be notified.***

***Chaplain's perspective of need for privacy.***

***Chaplain's perspective of physical needs.***

victims and families, the chaplain will often be the prime responder to notice and understand the physical needs of emergency crisis victims.

## ***PROVISION***

When the chaplain perceives needs of the victims, he or she may also be the first point of contact to either meet those needs, or to resource the meeting of those needs. In the case of a fire this may include short-term housing, clothing and food. For victims of a traffic accident it may be transportation or motel. There could be children that need to be cared for while a victim goes to the hospital or persons to be notified of a crisis situation. All of these and an endless list of other needs can either be met by the chaplain directly or, more often, resourced by the chaplain. Keeping an up to date list of help resources for a local community is vital for this task. The chaplain may even wish to poll local churches and organizations to see which ones can provide certain kinds of assistance in emergency crises. If the chaplain builds a relationship with these churches and other organizations, they will be able to trust that their resources are going to valid needs when the chaplain calls.

A suggested list of community resources is included here to give chaplains an idea of what their own list might look like.

***Create a list of local resources.***

Red Cross	Clothing Closet Ministry
City Housing Assistance	Late night pharmacy
Insurance Co #'s	Pet kennel
Domestic Violence Shelter	Coroner Office
Food Bank	Construction contractor
Local Churches	Crisis Child Care
Mental Health Agency	Critical Incident Stress
Team	
Commercial Cleaner (bio hazard certified)	

Often during a crisis, victims may not think to call upon their church or pastor, or may not want to bother them. Some victims, when faced with the cognitive and mental challenges of stress will forget names and phone numbers. The chaplain can be an excellent referral point for pastors and churches. Most churches can help form a net of support around the victims which will further the victim toward recovery.

The provision of a support network of some kind should be a primary goal of the chaplain on-scene. Victims of an emergency crisis will often feel like everything has been pulled out from under them and they are left without support. The reconstruction of this support network will help victims feel hopeful and able to move forward. The support network may include family, friends, co-workers, neighbors, church, school, clubs, civic organizations, emergency response organizations, or governmental agencies. Again, the resource list must be kept up to date and valid. Provision may or may not mean actually doing something *for* a victim. It is often much better to facilitate the victim being able to *do something for themselves* or for each other.

## ***PRAYER***

It certainly will not be the intent here to instruct a chaplain in how to pray. Types and practices of prayer are as varied as the individuals who respond as chaplains. There are some applications of prayer that can be discussed here, however. Prayer is always appropriate, and some specific applications of prayer seem to fit the emergency crisis scene quite well.

Going back to our first statements about the ministry of presence and the chaplain being in the presence of God as well as representing the presence of God, it only follows that the personal prayer of the chaplain is a necessary intervention tool in crisis response. The chaplain will benefit from a centering prayer while responding to the crisis scene, asking God to prepare him or her for what will be found there. Asking God to show where He is at work will enable the chaplain to be sensitive to needs on scene that require attention. Praying for him or herself as the chaplain approaches the scene is not at all selfish, but rather a wise preparation for on-scene ministry.

Opportunity may arise to pray for or with a victim or victims. Those who have a personal faith background will often find prayer during the crisis scene a comforting and strengthening intervention. The chaplain needs to be sensitive to the victim's own faith background and practice of prayer as well as being sensitive to others who may be involved. Public prayer in a group of like-minded church members on Sunday morning is one thing, while joining together a group who are together only because of a crisis emergency may be something completely different! Praying aloud or silently for victims may be appreciated and effectual as the chaplain takes advantage of opportunities during the crisis scene.

There may be times when the chaplain has a strong conviction to pray for some time of specific intervention on scene, such as healing or preservation. Most of the time a prayer for strength and comfort for victims is most appropriate and prayer for God's peace during a very

***Prayer is always appropriate... but how?***

un-peaceful situation is usually welcome. The topic for prayer will certainly vary with the details of the emergency, but the need for prayer remains constant.

## ***PERSISTENCE***

Persistence is a quality needed by the emergency response chaplain in several ways. There are needs for persistence on-scene, and needs for persistence in follow-up with victims of emergency crisis.

On-scene, the chaplain will need to be persistent in ministering to the crisis victims. This task is not always as easy as it sounds. People in crisis are often very difficult to interact with. They may be frightened, confused, or even angry. The target of these emotions, which are all normal emotions under stress, could very easily be the chaplain since he or she is close by. Many who stop and try to help in this challenging situation may determine that the victims do not want help and quickly distance themselves. The responding chaplain will need to be more persistent in trying to build a relationship of trust that will enable ministry to take place. Remarks directed at the chaplain as a result of the stress being experienced by victims are usually not really intended for the person of the chaplain. The task for the chaplain is to look beyond the present situation and through the remarks to discover a place of connection with the victim.

Emergency scenes can be filled with difficult to love people who are acting in less than friendly ways. The success of ministry can depend on the gentle persistence of the chaplain, showing patience and love independent of return.

After the fire trucks are gone and the ambulance and patrol vehicles are back in service, extended attention may be needed for the victims of crisis. The persistence of the chaplain in seeing to needs and staying as long as necessary can make the difference for people. A great deal of attention comes during the active phase of the crisis event, but often victims are left on their own when things calm down. It is at these times the chaplain can help victims deal with intense feelings such as regrets, doubt, hopelessness, and despair. Follow-up after the scene is over may help victims connect support that was given on-scene with resources available afterward.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Each crisis scene brings its own individual dangers and opportunities. For the fire chaplain who is tasked with ministry to crisis victims, each scene will present a new way to minister to people. Staying open to new ministry opportunities will keep the chaplain fresh and effective. Becoming conditioned and trained to use

***Persistence is needed on-scene and in follow-up.***

***Emergency scenes can be filled with “difficult to love” people.***

reminders like the “five P’s” will keep the chaplain focused on the needs at hand and building an efficient routine of ministry that can be adapted to many different crisis scene applications.

The “window of ministry opportunity” while dealing with crisis victims is narrow and opens only during and shortly after a crisis event. The needs that present during this time are specific to the crisis and require specific intervention on the part of the chaplain. Effective ministry on scene can mean a much quicker and smoother recovery and return to normalcy for those involved.

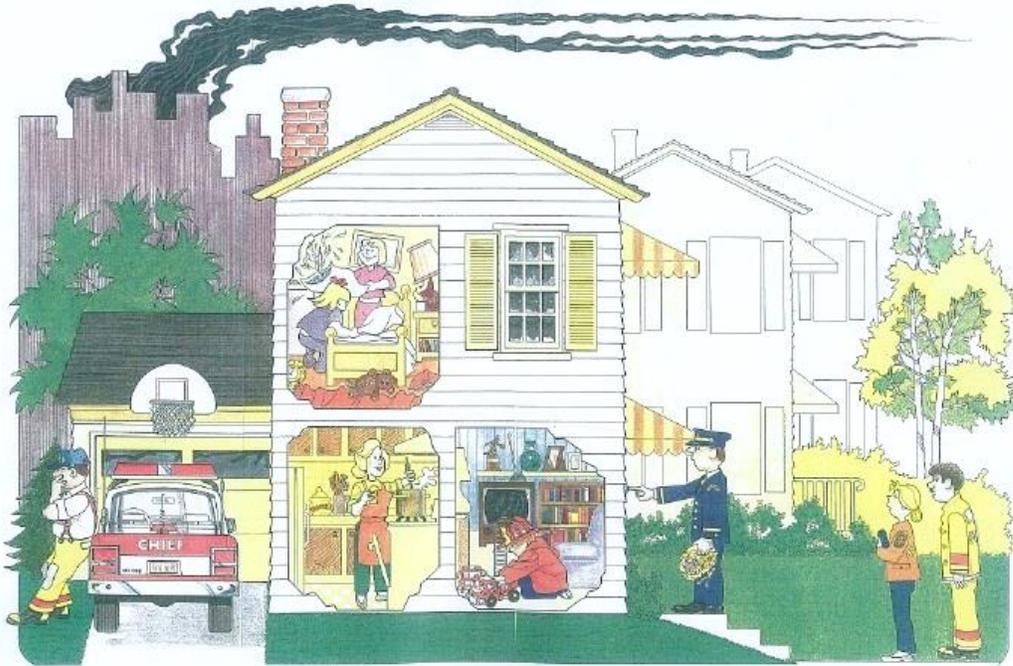


# SECTION II

## BASIC FIRE CHAPLAIN

### MINISTRY

### RESOURCES





# BEGINNING A FIRE DEPARTMENT CHAPLAINCY

## **Terry Bloss**

*Terry Bloss 2004-2005 president of the Federation of Fire Chaplains, He has also served as Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer for the organization, and is the program director for the Fire Chaplains Institute. Terry has been the editor of the FFC newsletter for ten years and is a certified Trauma Responder. He lives in Lewisville, Texas with his wife Suzie and serves as chaplain for the Carrollton Fire Department*

## **Ed Stauffer**

*Ed Stauffer, co-author of this chapter is founder and Executive Director of the Federation of Fire Chaplains. Ed served as firefighter and chaplain for the Fort Worth Fire Department, and as full time chaplain for the past twenty-six years. He helped to develop the Pastoral crisis Intervention training for ICISF. Ed and his wife Gayle make their home at Lake Whitney, Texas. They have six adult children together and have raised many others.*

## ***THE BEGINNING OF A FIRE DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN PROGRAM***

The first major step has been accomplished, that is the fact that your department wants to start a chaplaincy program. The rest of this document will be directed toward providing the information needed to make your fire department chaplain as effective as possible.

***Chaplains have been in fire service since the beginning.***

Fire departments by tradition have had someone in the role of chaplain since the beginning of the organized fire service. In many departments, a local clergy person has been appointed chaplain to handle emergency situations within the department, such as serious injury to fire department members, line-of-duty deaths, including notification of family members, and suicides involving fire department members and their families. Chaplains have fulfilled a traditional ceremonial role by giving the invocation at fire department functions, and conducting weddings and funerals for fire department family members.

All too often, the functions normally handled by a chaplain have been taken over by members of the administrative staff and firefighters within the department. When needs arose and no one was available to handle them, the staff and members of the department would do their best to handle the crisis. In the modern fire service, numerous factors have made it very desirable to establish a formal position of chaplain. With all the pressures present today, the need for this position is found in all fire departments—paid or volunteer, large or small, private or public.

As our world becomes more complex, facing the problems of life becomes dramatically more difficult. What used to be a straightforward, clear path to follow becomes cluttered with inflation, the energy crisis, environmental pollution, nuclear accidents, increasing crime, escalating levels of violence, crowded living conditions, and extremely intrusive challenges to our personal values and beliefs. The pressures of living in a complicated world affect us all. Many become emotionally and spiritually crippled when they find that what used to “work” is no longer effective in coping with the pressures.

***Many become emotionally and spiritually crippled in crisis***

People under stress tend to look to public agencies and institutions for answers and services that will solve society’s problems. When programs and services fail to improve and simplify living conditions, the providers are subject to the outrage of a frustrated public. As a result, individual public servants, such as a firefighter, are confronted with stress-producing accusations of ineffectiveness, inefficiency, and ulterior motives when they attempt to help. The emergency service worker is confronted with making a living in a

complex world, and with having to deal with disenchanted recipients of their services. At the same time, society seems to expect public servants to be immune to the effects of such stress. The emergency worker faces some very real risks if they even hint that the stress is too much or is getting to them. It is as if the firefighter is expected to be the “perfect” person. They are expected to solve problems, make the complex simple, and perform emergency responses without experiencing any emotional turmoil in the process.

Emergency service workers, such as firefighters, who respond to life-threatening situations, have additional stresses surrounding their lives that most professions do not have.

## 1. LEVEL OF UNCERTAINTY

It is a fact that when the alarm sounds, firefighters are going to respond. *THIS IS THEIR PROFESSION*. There is no such thing as a routine call until after the incident is safely over. When the alarm hits, the firefighter faces the unknown and, all too often, becomes the victim of a service-related injury or even death. The family of the emergency worker is under the stress of not knowing what is going to happen at any given incident.

*There is no such thing as a routine call until it is over.*

## 2. INTERPERSONAL TENSIONS

Interpersonal tensions are constant within the emergency services simply because of the very nature of the profession. The fire service organization creates a rigid working environment with a strong, competitive mentality on the part of the emergency worker.

Most promotions are made from within the department. Firefighters compete against their fellow firefighters for advancement. Shift work often leads to tensions. Long periods of time are spent with coworkers in training, station and equipment maintenance, fire prevention inspections, and in highly intense emergency incidents. The adrenaline is often flowing just because they are on duty. This factor alone increases tensions as firefighters try to deal with each other and the public while the body is in a continual state of alarm.

Often tensions are heightened by the long hours spent in the fire station away from their families. The fire service becomes the second family for the firefighter. This also adds stressors to the life of the emergency responder.

## 3. EXTREME PHYSICAL CONDITIONS

The difference between the tremendous physical pressures on the emergency worker, and a person in a profession that requires physical labor, is the manner in which the firefighters are called on to perform their duties. Average workers plan out their day to complete a particular task. Rest periods are planned to space out the use of their

energy over a length of time. They can also plan around weather or other problems if the need arises.

Emergency responders are called upon to perform their task regardless of the climactic or environmental conditions. In a very short period of time they can be completely physically and mentally exhausted, yet they must still keep going until the task is completed. Many times they complete one exhausting response only to be called to another crisis without having time to fully recuperate. The body and the mind of a firefighter are frequently drained after a tour of duty far more than the average person in a physical occupation.

## 4. HUMAN TRAGEDY AND CARNAGE

When something bad happens, the firefighter is going to be called upon to respond. Depending on the type, the intensity, the duration of the incident, and many other factors, this response can have some far-reaching effects on the emergency worker. The continued response to tragic situations must be dealt with properly. This specific problem in the firefighting/rescue profession demands the input of a chaplain or other qualified person able to identify the problems associated with response to human tragedy.

*Body and mind are drained from incident response.*

## 5. FEAR

Fear of the incident or fear of danger does not usually have a negative impact on emergency workers. “Fear” of the incident and what could happen normally translates into being cautious and having respect for the type of procedures needed to perform the task with the utmost safety. It is the fear of making a mistake that could cost a coworker or victim their life or cause further injury that produces the highest level of stress. Emergency workers tend to be perfectionists. When things go wrong, they start asking questions like, “What if I had only...?” Often feelings of guilt have to be dealt with after a particularly sad event.

*Fear of making a mistake that could cost a life causes high stress*

The uniqueness of the stressors mentioned here is that they face the emergency responder at all times. There is no time while they are on duty that these pressures are not present. When selecting a chaplain, or starting a chaplaincy program, these stresses need to be thoroughly understood. The chaplain must be able to recognize the signs of stress within department personnel and have methods to effectively help firefighters cope with the pressures they face on a daily basis.

# ***STARTING A CHAPLAINCY PROGRAM***

The first two steps in starting a chaplaincy program are confirming that your department wants the program, and then selecting the individual to be the chaplain. Assuming you have decided there is a need for a chaplain in your department, the problem of selecting the right person for the job is your next hurdle. Before making any selection, put into writing what your department expects to do or accomplish through the chaplaincy. Also decide what qualities you are looking for in the person that will serve as your fire department chaplain. These expectations need to be discussed with prospective chaplains during the selection process.

## **FINDING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES**

There are a number of methods that can be employed to assist you in finding the right person to be chaplain for your department.

1. Contact other fire departments, fire department chaplains, or the Federation of Fire Chaplains.
2. Look within your own department for a member who may also be a minister.
3. Check with your local ministerial alliance.
4. Look for persons who can provide ministry to department members of Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish beliefs. Or look for a person who is able to deal, without reservation, with all denominations and beliefs.
5. Consider your own personal knowledge of a clergy person who has shown an interest in, or would be good for, your department. Ask for suggestions from members of your fire department.
6. Appoint a committee to seek out candidates. Set times to meet and periodically review how the selection process is going.
7. Do not overlook those clergy persons that members of your department are most often calling for assistance.

Just as all people are not cut out to be firefighters, not all clergy can meet the needs of the emergency service. Just because an individual offers to assist does not mean he or she would be your best choice. Interview and run a background check, listen to recommendations, have the candidate visit with firefighters and get feedback as to whether the person would be able to build a confidential relationship with department members.

***The first  
“volunteer” may  
not be the best  
choice.***

## **A CHAPLAIN HAS BEEN SELECTED**

Once the right person has been found, the chief of the department should meet with the chaplain to discuss what is expected from the standpoint of the fire department, and from the standpoint of the chaplain. Means of contacting the chaplain by telephone, pager, or radio must be decided upon. A mission statement might be addressed during this meeting, along with an orientation on fire department procedures.

For a period of time, the new chaplain should plan on visiting all stations and all divisions of the department. Building rapport with the firefighters is essential from the beginning of the program. A time to visit with the union or association leaders is also very important.

The new chaplain should be introduced to the entire department through a formal process. This introduction should include a memo to the department announcing the appointment of the chaplain, and a formal meeting with department members. The meeting could be conducted at a supper or training. This would be a good time to present the new chaplain with a badge and identification card.

The chief should schedule a second meeting about ninety days after the appointment to evaluate the progress of the program. This meeting can be used to discuss changes that may be needed and guidelines for the program. It may also be good to establish a timetable for the development of the chaplaincy program within the department.

The department should enroll the new chaplain in the Federation of Fire Chaplains as soon as possible. This will provide the new chaplain with valuable materials, resources, and a network of fellow chaplains who can be called upon for information and support.

The chaplain must be fully supported by the chief administrator of the department and the department members if he or she is to be fully effective. Full support by the department is essential for the promotion of the fire department chaplaincy program. It is also essential to provide this support while allowing the chaplain to maintain strict confidentiality in his or her dealings with fire department members.

## **DUTIES OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT CHAPLAIN**

The following is a list of duties that may be incorporated into a chaplaincy program. The list does not include all the responsibilities that a chaplain can undertake, but it can be taken into consideration as you develop your individual department program.

*The chaplain  
must have the  
support of  
administration.*

## ***1. SPIRITUAL GUIDANCE***

Two important functions of the fire department chaplain are to help firefighters and their families in times of crisis and to help them with their spiritual needs. Of all the many duties the chaplaincy may entail, these are the principle responsibilities. The chaplain may use different ways to bring about spiritual truths and assistance to an individual family. However, the most important ministry is to simply be available when called upon. Spiritual need is the greatest of all needs and the chaplain must be able to meet this need. It is also a hard area for many ministers to get a “handle on.” The spiritual witness is more often by action rather than by word. The example set by the chaplain in all phases of life has more bearing on the firefighter than “preaching” about it.

Another important part of these functions is to understand the personal religious needs of the firefighters and to call their own minister to assist as soon as possible, if the family so desires. The chaplain can then assist their minister to understand the functions and the resources available through the fire department. This particular area of the chaplaincy is given intense coverage at all chaplain seminars and conferences.

***The most important ministry is to be available.***

## ***2. ASSISTANCE IN EMERGENCY SITUATIONS***

Dealing with families when a disabling injury or a death occurs is a primary function of the chaplain. To provide the best service at this type of incident, the chaplain should respond as often as possible to all major fire situations. If an injury to a firefighter occurs, the chaplain should meet the firefighter at the hospital, quickly determine the extent of the injury from the hospital staff, and then notify the family in a manner that will not cause undue panic or grief. At the time of the initial call or contact with the family, a decision should be made as to whether the family will need transportation to the hospital. When the family arrives, the chaplain should have an accurate report concerning the firefighter’s condition.

At fire incidents, the chaplain, if not involved in the actual work of the emergency, should be alert to the needs of the firefighters. The chaplain should be especially mindful that the types of people making emergency responses are easily capable of overexerting themselves to the point of exhaustion. Knowing this, the chaplain can make command officers aware of potentially dangerous situations that need immediate attention and/or medical attention.

At major fire incidents it is often the chaplain who is free to assist in handling unruly or hysterical people. This becomes a needed function at rescues, extrications, situations that draw a sizeable crowd, nursing homes, or incidents where children are involved. The importance of keeping a cool, calm demeanor during these times,

***The chaplain is often free to help with unruly people.***

along with the ability to explain to the public what is actually taking place, is a service the chaplain can perform. Comforting the bereaved and offering positive direction to the victim's family are priorities at these types of incidents. The chaplain can explain the types of assistance available to victims through the Red Cross, the Ladies Auxiliary, or other community service and benevolent organizations. When these interventions are used at the scene of an emergency, the results are generally successful in not only aiding the victims, but also in keeping distraught citizens from interfering with the performance of emergency operations.

### ***3. LIAISON WITH HOSPITALS AND CLINICS***

A chaplain should frequently visit local hospitals and medical clinics to build rapport with medical personnel. These visits help the chaplain to receive accurate and helpful reports from the hospital professionals who have confidence in the chaplain with whom they have become acquainted. This information aids the family of the firefighter in understanding what is taking place and to better understand the condition of their family member.

***Be familiar with insurance and benefit referrals.***

### ***4. EXPLAINING INSURANCE AND BENEFITS***

The chaplain should be knowledgeable of referrals to insurance and compensatory benefits available to the firefighters and to their families. These benefits come from many different sources such as insurance carried by the fire department, the municipality, the state, and the federal government. Many fire departments have their own relief associations, blood banks, and other benefits to aid their own sick and injured members.

### ***5. CONDUCTING/ASSISTING AT FUNERALS***

The chaplain can assist a family in funeral arrangements for both active and retired firefighters. They may even officiate at the service or assist the family minister. Assistance frequently is done in the form of organizing the details of the funeral service. Details to be considered include establishing an honor guard, preparing fire department apparatus for the funeral procession, organizing fire department members at the church or funeral home and at the cemetery, determining the location of the funeral, and arranging for procession escorts. The chaplain must develop a good working relationship with local funeral directors to help them understand the special rituals involved in a fire department funeral.

Support and consolation for the firefighter's family and children are responsibilities of the chaplain. The chaplain should always send condolences at the time of death of any member of a fire department and represent the department by offering any assistance

***Support and consolation of firefighter families is the responsibility of the chaplain.***

needed. This is a responsibility of the fire department chaplain that should never be neglected.

## **6. WEDDINGS**

The chaplain may be called upon to perform weddings for fire department personnel. Wedding etiquette, premarital counseling, and the actual performance of the ceremony are areas of expertise that the chaplain should take special care to develop. The chaplain should make known to department members any preferences held toward the actual wedding ceremony.

## **7. COUNSELING**

The daily pressures of the society in which we live has greatly contributed to the need for competent, caring counsel. It is not recommended that the chaplain should attempt to conduct counseling in all areas. The need for counseling in the areas of marriage, profession, family, substance abuse, delinquency, children, finances, critical incident stress management, and a host of other problem areas can quickly overwhelm an overzealous chaplain. The chaplain should be aware of the basics in these areas, and be knowledgeable of the type of help individuals may need. If the chaplain does not feel qualified, or for some reason is not able to counsel with a firefighter or family member, it is necessary to be able to direct them to a qualified counselor. Counselors may be available through members of an employee assistance program or other resources developed by the chaplain.

## **8. VISITATION**

A great deal of comfort, spiritual aid, friendship, and solid supportive help can be given to the sick, distraught, and injured through personal contact. Regular visitation at home, in the work place, and in the hospital is an important function of the chaplain. It is an excellent time for the chaplain to represent the administration and let the firefighter know that the department is thinking about him or her and is concerned about his or her welfare.

***Regular visitation provides support and builds relationship.***

## **9. AVAILABILITY**

The chaplain must be available seven days a week, twenty-four hours a day. When the chaplain cannot be available, it should be made known and someone else made available to fill in. In order for the chaplain to be available at all times, it is necessary for the fire department headquarters or dispatcher to be able to contact him or her by telephone, pager, or radio at all times. It is advisable for transportation to be made available, either through the furnishing of a vehicle or through a transportation fund to assist in the cost of

responding. The expense fund should include all unusual expenses incurred in administering the chaplain's duties.

## ***10. GAINING RESPECT***

Gaining the respect of fire department members is a must for the effectiveness and credibility of the chaplain. It should be noted that respect cannot be demanded, it must be earned by the chaplain as he or she works to develop a relationship with the fire department administration and members. Respect comes as the chaplain demonstrates commitment, dedication, and care for firefighters and their families. The chaplain gains respect by showing respect for members of the department through his or her words and actions. The chaplain earns respect by continuing to participate in fire department activities, emergency and routine, regardless of how hard the going may get.

***Respect must be earned by the chaplain.***

## ***11. ATTENDING FUNCTIONS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT***

The chaplain may be called upon to represent the fire department at official functions or public meetings to give an invocation, dedicatory prayer, or benediction. Many times the chief and other active members of the department or city administrators are tied up with important meetings or scheduled activities. It may fall to the chaplain to represent these people at social functions, homes, hospitals, before civic groups, or to other fire departments.

It is often the chaplain who carries expressions of sympathy, condolences, or congratulations to firefighters and their families. In today's fire service it is becoming more and more difficult for the fire chief to make all the required personal contacts with firefighters and their families. This can be a valuable function that the chaplain can perform for the chief to meet the needs of the rank and file department members and communicate messages from the administration.

***Public representation of the department is a valuable opportunity.***

## ***12. COMMUNICATIONS WITH FIREFIGHTERS***

Communications with firefighters has been mentioned in different ways throughout this document. Communication in one form or another is the most important service the chaplain provides and is greatly needed by fire service personnel. Personal, direct contact by visiting fire personnel should be built into every chaplaincy program. Visiting fire stations at least once a month on alternating shifts is a good practice in the fire service chaplaincy.

Communications also takes place through telephone calls, sending letters or cards on Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving, and other special occasions. Sympathy cards can be sent to those in need, as well

as congratulations for marriages, births, promotions, special recognition for valor, etc. A monthly or quarterly prayer breakfast or meeting with interested personnel is an important phase of the chaplaincy. All of the foregoing methods of communication are recommended practices that will build relationships and keep lines of communication open between the chaplain and the firefighters that are served.

### ***13. RETIRED FIREFIGHTERS***

A major effort should be made by the chaplain to assist retired firefighters and their families. This can be done by keeping in touch with the leaders of the retired firefighters association and by being alert to notice the needs of retired personnel. Chaplains should be available to minister to the needs of retired personnel as they would for active duty firefighters.

### ***14. TEACHING TRAINING CLASSES***

The teaching of training classes by the fire department chaplain should not be overlooked by department administration. Classes can be taught on the resources and services available through the chaplaincy program, critical incident stress management, family life, chain of command, ethics, and many other areas. Frequently the chaplain teaches classes on integrity and moral responsibilities. This area of service should be considered from the beginning stages of the chaplaincy program.

***Leading In-service training will put the chaplain face to face with firefighters.***

### ***15. PROGRAM DIRECTOR***

The chaplain is often considered the personnel service officer or crisis management coordinator. The coordination of the critical incident response team can fall under the duties of the chaplain. In some departments the chaplain is a representative of the employee assistance program.

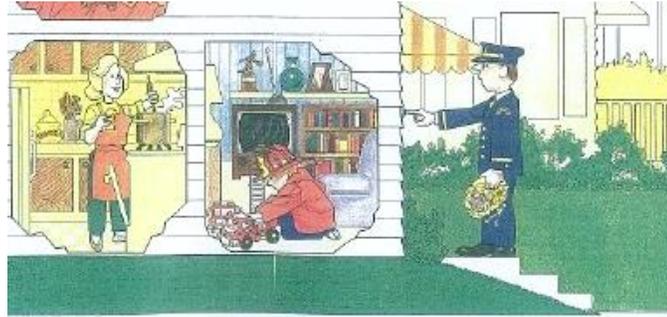
## **CONCLUSION**

The chaplain of the fire department is one of the most vital positions in the fire service. The chaplain is next to the pulse of the department. It is a job that is demanding, confidential, trusting, and needful for the lives of firefighters and their families. The fire department administrator considering a chaplaincy program can rest assured that it is one of the finest and most needed programs that can be started.

This has been a brief overview of beginning a fire service chaplaincy program. There are many areas that could be added, and many, you may not consider being needs for your department. The

next steps are to weigh, consider, investigate, and determine your needs and wants. Then institute the chaplaincy program in your department.

To the chaplain reviewing these guidelines, accept the chaplaincy with pride but serve in it with humility, constantly calling on God for strength and wisdom.



# FIRE CHAPLAIN OPERATIONS

**PROFESSIONALISM**  
**CONFIDENTIALITY**  
**EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**  
**SAFETY**  
**INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM**

*The material contained in this chapter is a compilation from several sources. References indicate when material was taken from a specific source.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

In the realm of fire chaplaincy there are a wide range of ministry models and styles. Within this range is a commonality of operation for fire chaplains that will be discussed here. Some topics have to do with emergency on-scene operations. Others may apply to any situation and be considered more standard operating procedures. Recognizing that some fire chaplains focus on ministry to personnel, while others concentrate on victim support, many are involved at some level in both. Functions related to the role of the fire chaplain may include things like:

1. On scene victim support
2. Ministry of presence (personnel & victims)
3. Death & injury notifications
4. Official service funerals
5. Public Safety Officer benefits
6. Critical Incident Stress Management
7. Hospital visitation
8. Employee Assistance Programs
9. Informal counsel
10. Other duties as assigned!

Whether on scene or in station, it is important that the chaplain has worked out methods of operation with his or her fire department so that both the chaplain and the agency have a clear expectation of activity and performance. The chaplain should establish:

1. WHAT he or she is able and expected to do.
2. HOW he or she is to accomplish the tasks.
3. How to EXPLAIN, (or translate) the chaplaincy work to others.
4. ACT professionally in the area of responsibility.

It is strongly suggested that the chaplain keep relationship in mind above all else in developing operating guidelines. The chaplain has the unique opportunity to minister to fire personnel at all levels as well as community residents if relationships are valued above things such as prestige and placement. Some things to keep in mind:

1. Represent the department with pride!
2. Always make the boss (all of your bosses) look good.
3. Do not allow yourself to make critical comments in a public setting.
4. Take valid concerns back to the boss.
5. If you don't know, tell them so.
6. Be a clergyman to those who seek one.
7. Explain the special role of chaplaincy to those who need to know.

The special role as mentioned above includes the fact that the chaplain is called upon to act in role of religious pluralism without

giving up or betraying his or her own faith tradition. This means the chaplain will need to learn to be familiar with other faith traditions and become culturally aware of the community in which he or she ministers. The primacy of relationship means that chaplains recognize, honor, and respect the cultural and religious differences between firefighters, victims, community members, and themselves.

In spite of all of the variables mentioned here, it is also true that some things never change in chaplain ministry. In the activities of an emergency service chaplain there are practices that remain constant regardless of the type of response. Whether ministering to personnel or victims, whether responding to a house fire or a fatality car crash, the chaplain must always keep some baselines of operation in mind. This chapter will discuss five things that are always the same for the chaplain; safety, professionalism, incident command, Employee Assistance Programs and referrals, and confidentiality. Developing good habits and practices in these areas will go a long way toward being an effective minister at crisis scenes.

## ***PROFESSIONALISM***

Most fire chaplains are volunteers. Some may be firefighters while others are clergy. There are even a small number of fire chaplains who are in paid positions as such. Regardless of placement pay or position, all fire chaplains need to consider their ministry assignment professionally. It does the fire department, the church, the community, the chaplain his or herself, and even God a disservice to act in anything less than a professional manner. The items covered here will be broad in nature. Each chaplain will need to consider his or her own ministry setting and determine how these and other concerns of professionalism apply.

## **THE CHAPLAIN ROLE**

The specifics of what a chaplain does and how to go about those tasks are covered in other places in this manual. The topic here is how the chaplain goes about using those tasks and responsibilities to establish his or her “role” as chaplain. There is a difference between an individual having the title of fire department chaplain and having the firefighters, administration, and community recognize an individual as the department chaplain. Some of the role issues have definitive answers. Many need to be worked out thoughtfully on a case by case basis. Several will be presented here as questions to be considered.

1. Chaplains vs. Pastor – Many chaplains are also full or part time clergy in a parish setting. How does the role of parish minister differ or coincide with the role of chaplain?

2. Chaplain as Pastor – In some ways the chaplain will act as the pastor for the department. How does this play out with firefighters who have their own pastors? How about those who don't?
3. Chaplain vs. Firefighter – Some chaplains also perform the role of firefighter. What inherent conflicts are possible? What advantages does this arrangement have over the pastor/chaplain design?
4. Chaplain as Firefighter – Once the firefighter has become the chaplain, how does the firefighter role change? How do others in the department see it?

## CULTURAL CONSIDERATIONS

Some pastors minister in multi-cultural settings. Almost *all* fire chaplains will be called upon to minister multi-culturally. When thinking about cultural differences and what they mean to ministry, it is helpful to consider them in sub-groups.

1. Ethnic – The chaplain needs to know what ethnic groups are present in the community and who the leaders and influencers are. Some ethnic groups may bring with them some cultural practices that are very different from the chaplain's experience, but very important to the group.
2. Racial – Some racial groups carry practices and priorities that will influence how a fire department and fire chaplain interact with them.
3. Religious – This area, of course, becomes an important one for the chaplain. Each chaplain should have a general knowledge of the different religions and faith groups in the community and what their basic beliefs are. How will these beliefs influence their interactions during a time of crisis or emergency?
  - a. Christian – Catholic/Protestant
  - b. Differences in Protestant denominations
  - c. Jewish
  - d. Islam
  - e. Hindu
  - f. Buddhist
  - g. Sects
  - h. Other?

## PLURALISM

Fire chaplains will become aware of and perhaps be looked to for counsel by the firefighters for the existence of different types of people who have different beliefs and opinions within the same

society. As communities grow, they see a more diverse and richer blend of people within their borders. The fire department may or may not reflect the diversity of the community they serve, but the chaplain will always have to be aware of, and learn to minister to, this melting pot of humanity. Since, by definition, pluralism cannot be truly considered by one individual, chaplains must find a forum for discussion and answers. Some topics for discussion may include:

1. Pluralistic religious needs
2. Finding common denominators (a mathematics model)
3. Inherent conflicts
4. Finding middle ground
5. Difficulty of meeting ALL individual needs
6. Dangers of pluralism for the chaplain
  - a. Can't be "everything to everyone"
  - b. Embracing differences while remaining true to personally held values
  - c. Remaining a "solid" influence in a "watered down" world
7. Areas of sensitivity
  - a. Religious
  - b. Ethnic
  - c. Cultural
  - d. Gender ( and gender preference)
  - e. Other?

## ***CONFIDENTIALITY***

The issue of confidentiality is one that presents often in the work of the fire chaplain. There will be confidentiality concerns within the department as the chaplain ministers to firefighters. There will be concerns on crisis scenes as the chaplain learns personal information about the victims and the incident. Sometimes confidence is "assumed", rightly or wrongly, by those with whom a chaplain is ministering. Other times it is the chaplain who must educate and instruct others in issues of confidentiality. Here we will explore confidentiality in terms of its importance within fire departments, some legal considerations, and an introduction to the Health Insurance Patient Privacy Act.

## **IN AND AROUND THE FIRE DEPARTMENT**

In most fire departments there is ample time spent around the station talking about calls and each other. Sometimes the re-telling of incidents is beneficial from a critical incident stress stance, but it also presents the opportunity to abuse private information. The chaplain can easily become involved in this "shop talk" since he or she is often considered part of the fire "family" and the activity seemingly builds

rapport. The danger comes when the chaplain, because of his or her role in the incident, has information beyond the scope of the rest of the team and feels the need to share. The internal need to share interesting bits of story is hard to suppress but can sometimes lead to breaking confidences. If firefighters hear the chaplain sharing personal information heard on scene, their likelihood of telling the chaplains anything personal in nature themselves decreases dramatically. If an important confidence is broken, the chaplain may find his or her own ministry damaged and the chaplain program finished. The chaplain should be known as a safe person to talk with. Confidence in the chaplain is built by the confidentiality of the chaplain.

Other areas for chaplains in which chaplains must exercise confidentiality caution include:

1. Personnel actions
2. Firefighter family situations
3. Operations (especially involving police)
4. Media
  - a. Never talk to media unless assigned by command
  - b. Only share what has been approved
  - c. Be careful to separate news information and confidential information
5. Being “pumped” for information by
  - a. Personnel
  - b. Chaplain’s family
  - c. Public
  - d. Parishioners
6. Legal Aspects
  - a. Vary widely from state to state
  - b. Consider future ministry opportunity
  - c. Licensed minister vs. other chaplain
  - d. Information entrusted in course of “priestly” role
  - e. Can be criminal charges and sentences!

## **HIPAA**

HIPAA is an acronym for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996. Almost all health care providers, including pre-hospital care, must abide by the regulations of HIPAA. This means that if the fire chaplain works with a department which provides emergency medical care, the chaplain will need to understand the basics of HIPAA. The most important parts of the regulation for chaplains have to do with sharing medical information. The law gives the patient privacy rights regarding their health care information and medical records. Common sense regarding what should be shared and who it should be shared with will go a long way towards compliance, but chaplains should attend a HIPAA training event sponsored by their fire department or local hospital. Most agencies will have HIPAA

Training as a part of new employee training and will be glad to include a volunteer chaplain in their class. Remember, in order to be a continuing asset to the department, the chaplain cannot become a legal liability.

## ***EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS***

Employee Assistance Programs or *EAPs* are usually employer sponsored systems designed to allow employees easy access to mental health providers. The employer will negotiate an agreement with mental health professionals to provide services for employees which are billed to the employer. Normally this is done by paying a fixed monthly fee, or use-fee basis that is confidential. The employer may know that the service is being used, but not by whom.

This arrangement makes it easier for employees to have access to mental health interventions. The visits are already paid for (usually a pre-determined number of visits, or hours with no insurance approval needed), they are confidential (no personal report is given and no permission required), and the provider has been prescreened (no hassle looking around for a qualified provider). Employees are more likely to use services that have been prearranged this way and employers are more likely to keep healthy employees on the job. Most fire departments have EAP services available for paid and volunteer staff. Many use mental health providers with experience or training in emergency services needs.

The fire chaplain may become involved with a department EAP in several places. Often the chaplain can serve on a selection and evaluation committee for EAP providers. The chaplain may be assigned or volunteer to interview prospective providers and help determine their fitness for working with firefighters and firefighter families. Since the chaplain will have a good understanding of confidentiality issues, he or she can assure that EAP use and access is kept appropriately confidential.

The place the chaplain is almost sure to become involved is in making referrals to the EAP. Chaplains are often the first point of contact for firefighters on personal issues. If the chaplain has done a good job of building relationships within the department and building a level of trust with personnel, he or she will be able to meet with firefighters, help to evaluate the personal problems, and encourage further intervention from an appropriate EAP provider. The chaplain would do well to get to know the providers and learn the specialties and strengths of each. A good referral will go a long way to building trust from firefighters and from the providers. Conversely, an inappropriate referral will damage opportunity for further ministry.

If a fire department has no EAP services, the chaplain can become a champion for developing a program. Chaplains who are not trained certified counselors should not attempt to be the “department counselor.” Informal counseling on the tailboard of an engine, or coffee with a firefighter who is struggling with an issue are always a great opportunity for ministry, but wise chaplains will know their limitations and will know where, when, and how to make a good referral.

## ***SAFETY***

Safety is a top priority for emergency personnel at all times. Departments train continually to build safe practices on the fire ground, at accident scenes, or crime scenes, and even during routine activities. While responding with fire, police, and rescue crews, the chaplain will be putting himself/herself in very dangerous situations. It is important to remember that the other personnel on the emergency scene have spent considerable time and effort to be able to think and act safely on the scene. The chaplain should train to think and act likewise whether at the station, on the training grounds, or at a scene.

## **RESPONDING TO SCENE**

Firefighters who operate emergency apparatus are required to take classes and pass exams in safe driving practices. Chaplains who are also firefighters will have the advantage of this training being available to them. Programs such as EVAP (Emergency Vehicle Accident Prevention) teach ultra-defensive driving and special skills related to driving conditions specific to emergency response. Most chaplains are not driving vehicles equipped with emergency warning lights and sirens, but will still benefit from these types of special safety training. Chaplains who respond to the emergency scene will be faced with many of the same dangers facing fire trucks and ambulance, even though they are driving a private or unmarked vehicle.

When driving to a crisis scene, the chaplain must not only be cautious of the normal hazards of the road, but must also think of the additional hazards present because of the unique situation. Some of these unique hazards are:

1. Presence of emergency vehicles
  - a. High speed
  - b. Converging at same location
  - c. Large and Heavy
2. Distracted civilian traffic
  - a. By emergency vehicles
  - b. By emergency event itself (rubber-neckers)
  - c. Unpredictable behavior (many drivers do not simply move to the right safely!)

3. Foreign substances on roadway (gasoline or oil from accidents, water from fire operations, etc.)
4. Pedestrians stepping out to see the scene or the fire truck
5. Other?

A key in driving to emergency scenes is keeping a “wide-angle view.” In the midst of the excitement of an emergency, it is very easy for the chaplain to become narrowly focused on his or her own job and not pay close enough attention to all that is happening around the scene. If a chaplain responding to a house fire is thinking only of getting there, he or she may well miss the fact that there is a twelve-ton fire truck bearing down on them from a side street! Practice keeping a wide “field of view” at all times when driving so that it becomes a habit when responding.

The last item of care when responding to a scene is parking upon arrival. The chaplain must once again use the wide angle view to determine where emergency vehicles are operating or may be operating soon. The chaplain should keep his or her vehicle outside of the area of operations, but close enough to be of use in sheltering victims or providing transport. A discussion of driving and parking expectations should be included when a chaplain program is developed. If it hasn’t happened yet, the chaplain should initiate the discussion with fire department officials so that expectations are known and met.

## **ON-SCENE SAFETY**

Upon arriving at an emergency scene, a whole new set of safety concerns arises. Several safety issues at particular types of scenes will be discussed here. One thing to keep in mind on any emergency scene is where to be and where not to be. Simply paying attention to location and proximity to hazards can mitigate many safety concerns. This awareness again involves the “wide-angle view.” When the chaplain arrives on scene, whether it is on emergency apparatus or by private vehicle, it becomes very easy to narrow his or her focus on the chaplaincy issues at hand. The chaplain may zero in on family members during a house fire, or on the grieving spouse of a heart attack victim. Many chaplains and individuals involved in ministry have worked hard to build the skill of being able to really focus on one person completely, even when other distractions abound. Although the recipient of such focus may appreciate the attention, the practice can be dangerous for the chaplains and anyone with them.

The danger in narrowing focus on scene is that it diminishes awareness of hazards that exist nearby. While concentrating on the story being told by a family member, the chaplain may become oblivious to the fact that a hose has been laid behind them, or that the fire has now extended to a tree in the front yard. Exclusive focus on a grieving spouse may make the chaplain unaware that a paramedic is

handling sharp needles right behind them. Using the “wide angle view” will help chaplains create a mental perimeter around the incident, whether it is a city block or a living room, and make conscious choices about where to stand, sit or walk, keeping at the outside edge of dangerous operations.

### ***UNIQUE HAZARDS ON STRUCTURE FIRE SCENES***

Structure fires have many inherent dangers to firefighters and bystanders. Attendance at fire department safety meetings can help a non-firefighter chaplain become acquainted with dangers on scene and good safety practices. Firefighter/chaplains need to be sure to take their safety practices with them when they put on the chaplain’s hat.

Some unique hazards on structure fires include:

1. unstable buildings
2. water hazards
3. noise (masking danger and causing distractions)
4. heavy equipment
5. accountability (often the chaplain is a part of the team, but not part of accountability)
6. other?

### ***UNIQUE HAZARDS ON TRAFFIC ACCIDENT SCENES***

Just being in traffic without an accident can be hazardous enough today, but when an accident has occurred, the hazards multiply. If a chaplain is called to the scene of a traffic accident, all of the general safety guidelines apply, as well as the need for extra caution due to specific dangers. The following are examples of dangers that should be kept in mind.

1. Unstable vehicles – cars involved in accidents may move unexpectedly. They can roll, fall, or burn. They may also have sharp steel, glass, or plastic edges exposed.
2. Other traffic – secondary accidents caused by inattention of drivers are unfortunately very common. Emergency workers must always be watching oncoming traffic while working in and around an accident scene.
3. Leaks and spills – of fluids from vehicles can be corrosive and fumes may be caustic.
4. Other?

### ***UNIQUE HAZARDS ON MEDICAL SCENES***

A common scene for many chaplains doing victim support ministry is the living room of a home where a medical emergency is taking place. A stroke, heart attack, or trauma victim will be the focus of emergency medical crews, while chaplain ministers to the secondary victims, the spouse, family member, or friends. In this

setting, there are many dangers looming that may not be as obvious as a burning building or mangled car. Be aware of the following:

1. Blood born pathogens – are a constant threat to emergency crews whenever blood and other body fluids are exposed. Chaplains will be wise to take training through their agency in universal precautions for these threats. A supply of medical gloves (and wearing them) will become a valuable habit for the chaplain. Gloves can always be removed if there is no threat, but it is usually too late to go find them if there is one. Remember, the chaplain never knows what he or she is walking into when entering a home.
2. Other communicable disease – air and surface born disease can be just as unpleasant and dangerous as blood born disease. Although paranoia should be avoided, a healthy respect for these dangers will ensure long-term health.
3. Sharps – medical crews will often be using hypodermic in patient treatment. They will follow safety protocol to avoid accidentally sticking themselves or someone else. It is the chaplain’s responsibility however to be sure that he or she is not the recipient of an unintended needle stick!
4. Lifting – because chaplains tend to be helpful types, it is not uncommon to become the helper in lifting or moving a patient. This activity accounts for a large percentage of back injuries each year. Be sure to use good lifting techniques and train with your emergency crew in these skills.
5. Other?

### ***UNIQUE HAZARDS ON CRIME SCENES***

Since some injuries are not accidental, it is not uncommon for the fire chaplain to end up on crime scenes. Some fire chaplains also serve with law enforcement agencies increasing chances of being on crime scenes. In addition to the dangers related to the scene of a trauma itself, crime scenes carry their own set of hazards.

1. Unsecured scene – in the case of homicide or suicide, the scene may be unsecured at the chaplain’s arrival. Weapons or perpetrators may still be around posing personal threat.
2. Return of perpetrator – even if the perpetrator of the crime is not present initially, it is not uncommon for them to return to the scene for many reasons. Exercise utmost care and attention to bystanders on any crime scene.
3. Anger and violence of family/victims – retribution and vigilantism can cause the people whom the chaplain is working with to act out violently. Often the violence may not be aimed at anyone specifically, and the chaplain might be the closest target, or standing near the closest target. Constant awareness of surroundings will help guard the chaplain’s safety.

## ***INCIDENT COMMAND SYSTEM***

When working with any organization it is important to learn “who does what.” For the chaplain working with fire departments it is imperative to understand the command structure and operational structure. When working on scene, fire agencies across the nation of adopted the Incident Command System (ICS). The ICS system is often used off-scene as well as an effective management tool. Though interpretations and adaptation of ICS may vary some around the country, the basics are the same and a basic understanding is all the chaplain needs to operate effectively within the fire service. “ICS is the model tool for command, control, and coordination of a response and provides a means to coordinate the efforts of individual agencies as they work toward the common goal of stabilizing the incident and protecting life, property, and the environment. ICS uses principles that have been proven to improve efficiency and effectiveness in a business setting and applies the principles to emergency response.”<sup>11</sup> Understanding ICS will help the chaplain to work safely and efficiently and will make him or her valuable in interpreting fire operations to victims, bystanders, and others. The chaplain may also become a part of the ICS on scene, reporting to a certain post and possibly having others who report to the chaplain.

We live in a complex world in which responding to emergencies, from single-car accidents to large-scale disasters, often requires cooperation among several agencies. In an emergency, you and other personnel from your agency may be called upon to help with the response. Given the current movement toward using an ICS structure for emergency response, it is likely, therefore, that you will function in an ICS environment. In an emergency, you may not be working for your day-to-day supervisor, or you may be working in a different location. Thus, emergency response operations are *not* “business as usual.” It becomes critical to ministry success that the chaplain knows who he or she is responsible to, because often that person may not assume responsibility for the chaplain until communication is established. It is therefore the chaplain’s job to:

1. Know where they fit in the chain of command (on scene and off)
2. Know the responsibilities of the office.
3. Know the privileges and limitations of the office. (Chaplains often have rank without command)

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<sup>11</sup> FEMA, *Basic Incident Command System*, Emergency Management Institute, Emmitsburg, MD, 1998. p.8.

## HISTORY OF ICS

ICS was developed in the 1970s in response to a series of major wildland fires in southern California. At that time, municipal, county, State, and Federal fire authorities collaborated to form the Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE). FIRESCOPE identified several recurring problems involving multi agency responses, such as:

1. *Nonstandard terminology* among responding agencies.
2. Lack of capability to *expand and contract* as required by the situation.
3. *Nonstandard and nonintegrated communications*.
4. Lack of *consolidated action plans*.
5. Lack of *designated facilities*.

Efforts to address these difficulties resulted in the development of the original ICS model for effective incident management. Although originally developed in response to wildfires, ICS has evolved into an all-risk system that is appropriate for all types of fire and non-fire emergencies. Much of the success of ICS has resulted directly from applying:

- A common organizational structure.
- Key management principles in a standardized way.<sup>12</sup>

In response to attacks on September 11, President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 5 (HSPD-5) in February 2003. HSPD-5 called for a National Incident Management System (NIMS) and identified steps for improved coordination of Federal, State, local, and private industry response to incidents and described the way these agencies will prepare for such a response. The Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security announced the establishment of NIMS in March 2004. One of the key features of NIMS is the Incident Command System.

## ORGANIZATION OF ICS

Information on the organization of the Incident Command System is taken directly from the FEMA IS 195 and IS 100 classes referenced above. Chaplains who wish to learn more about ICS can access Independent Study classes on the FEMA website at <http://www.fema.gov/emi/ishome.htm>.

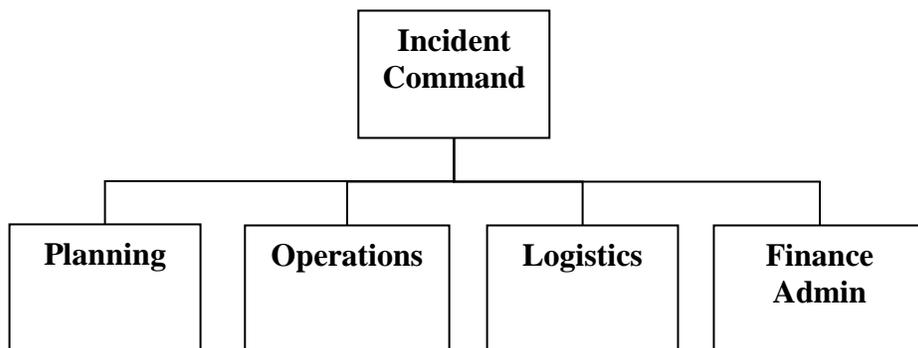
The ICS organizational structure develops in a top-down, modular fashion that is based on the size and complexity of the incident, as well as the specifics of the hazard environment created by the incident. As incident complexity increases, the organization expands from the top down as functional responsibilities are delegated.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid 28.

The ICS organizational structure is flexible. When needed, separate functional elements can be established and subdivided to enhance internal organizational management and external coordination. As the ICS organizational structure expands, the number of management positions also expands to adequately address the requirements of the incident. The ICS organization is built around five major components:

1. Command.
2. Planning.
3. Operations.
4. Logistics.
5. Finance/Administration.



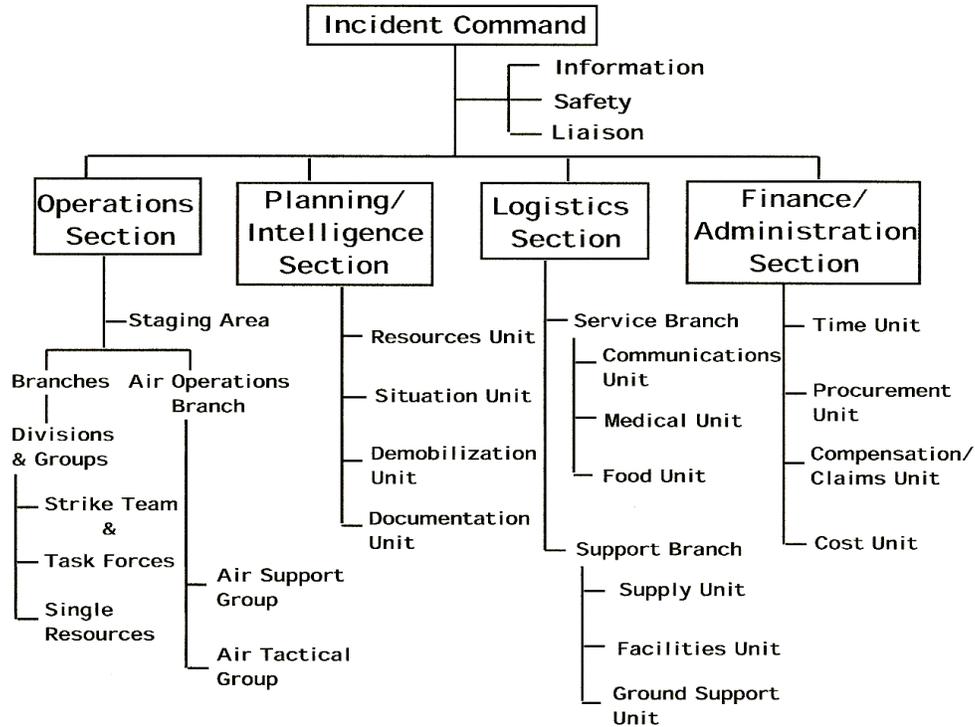
These five major components are the foundation upon which the ICS organization develops. They apply during a routine emergency, when preparing for a major event, or when managing a response to a major disaster. In small-scale incidents, one person, the Incident Commander, may manage all of the components. Large-scale incidents usually require that each component, or *section*, be set up separately. Each of the primary ICS sections may be divided into smaller functions as needed. The ICS organization has the capability to expand or contract to meet the needs of the incident, but all incidents, regardless of size or complexity, will have an Incident Commander. A basic ICS operating guideline is that the Incident Commander is responsible for on-scene management until command authority is transferred to another person, who then becomes the Incident Commander.<sup>13</sup>

ICS organization is unique but easy to understand. There is no correlation between the ICS organization and the administrative structure of any single agency or jurisdiction. This is deliberate, because confusion over different position titles and organizational structures has been a significant stumbling block to effective incident management in the past. For example, someone who serves as a Chief every day may not hold that title when deployed under an ICS structure. The expanded system can look quite different, but accurately

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid 33.

describes the reality in the field. We will examine each of the five main functions.



## ***INCIDENT COMMAND***

The command function is directed by the Incident Commander, who is the person in charge at the incident, and who must be fully qualified to manage the response. Major responsibilities for the Incident Commander include: "

1. Performing command activities, such as establishing command and establishing the ICP.
2. Protecting life and property.
3. Controlling personnel and equipment resources.
4. Maintaining accountability for responder and public safety, as well as for task accomplishment.
5. Establishing and maintaining an effective liaison with outside agencies and organizations, including the EOC, when it is activated.

Incident management encompasses:

1. Establishing command.
2. Ensuring responder safety.
3. Assessing incident priorities.
4. Determining operational objectives.
5. Developing and implementing the Incident Action Plan (IAP).
6. Developing an appropriate organizational structure. "

7. Maintaining a manageable span of control.
8. Managing incident resources.
9. Coordinating overall emergency activities.
10. Coordinating the activities of outside agencies.
11. Authorizing the release of information to the media.
12. Keeping track of costs.

An effective Incident Commander must be assertive, decisive, objective, calm, and a quick thinker. To handle all of the responsibilities of this role, the Incident Commander also needs to be adaptable, flexible, and realistic about his or her limitations. The Incident Commander also needs to have the capability to delegate positions appropriately as needed for an incident. Initially, the Incident Commander will be the senior first-responder to arrive at the scene. As additional responders arrive, command will transfer on the basis of who has primary authority for overall control of the incident. As incidents grow in size or become more complex, the responsible jurisdiction or agency may assign a more highly qualified Incident Commander. At transfer of command, the outgoing Incident Commander must give the incoming Incident Commander a full briefing and notify all staff of the change in command.

As incidents grow, the Incident Commander may delegate authority for performing certain activities to others, as required. When expansion is required, the Incident Commander will establish the other *Command Staff* positions:

1. The *Information Officer* handles all media inquiries and coordinates the release of information to the media with the Public Affairs Officer at the EOC.
2. The *Safety Officer* monitors safety conditions and develops measures for ensuring the safety of all assigned personnel.
3. The *Liaison Officer* is the on-scene contact for other agencies assigned to the incident.

The Incident Commander will base the decision to expand (or contract) the ICS organization on three major incident priorities:

1. ***Life safety.*** The Incident Commander's first priority is *always* the life safety of the emergency responders and the public.
2. ***Incident stability.*** The Incident Commander is responsible for determining the strategy that will:
  - à Minimize the effect that the incident may have on the surrounding area.
  - à Maximize the response effort while using resources efficiently.
 The size and complexity of the command system that the Incident Commander develops should be in keeping with the *complexity* (i.e., level of difficulty in the response) of the incident, not the size (which is based on geographic area or number of resources).

3. ***Property conservation.*** The Incident Commander is responsible for minimizing damage to property while achieving the incident objectives.

As incidents become more involved, the Incident Commander can activate additional *General Staff* sections (that is, Planning, Operations, Logistics, and/or Finance/Administration), as necessary. Each Section Chief, in turn, has the authority to expand internally to meet the needs of the situation.

## ***PLANNING***

In smaller events, the Incident Commander is responsible for planning, but when the incident is of larger scale, the Incident Commander establishes the *Planning Section*. The Planning Section's function includes the collection, evaluation, dissemination, and use of information about the development of the incident and status of resources. This section's responsibilities can also include creation of the Incident Action Plan (IAP), which defines the response activities and resource utilization for a specified time period.

## ***OPERATIONS***

The *Operations Section* is responsible for carrying out the response activities described in the IAP. The Operations Section Chief coordinates Operations Section activities and has primary responsibility for receiving and implementing the IAP. The Operations Section Chief reports to the Incident Commander and determines the required resources and organizational structure within the Operations Section. The Operations Section Chief's main responsibilities are to:

1. Direct and coordinate all operations, ensuring the safety of Operations Section personnel.
2. Assist the Incident Commander in developing response goals and objectives for the incident.
3. Implement the IAP.
4. Request (or release) resources through the Incident Commander.
5. Keep the Incident Commander informed of situation and resource status within operations.

## ***LOGISTICS***

The *Logistics Section* is responsible for providing facilities, services, and materials, including personnel to operate the requested equipment for the incident. This section takes on great significance in long-term or extended operations. It is important to note that the Logistics Section functions are geared to support the incident responders. For example, the Medical Unit in the Logistics Section provides care for the incident responders not civilian victims.

## ***FINANCE/ADMINISTRATION***

Though sometimes overlooked, the *Finance/ Administration Section* is critical for tracking incident costs and reimbursement accounting. Unless costs and financial operations are carefully recorded and justified, reimbursement of costs is difficult, if not impossible. The Finance/Administration Section is especially important when the incident is of a magnitude that may result in a Presidential Declaration. Each of these functional areas can be expanded into additional organizational units with further delegation of authority. They also may be contracted as the incident deescalates.

As the chaplain ministers on-scene he or she will need to be aware of personnel who are fulfilling the positions above and other positions as the incident expands. Chaplains who ignore the Incident Command System and try to “work around” it instead of within it may find themselves without a place to minister!

# CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT

*This chapter is taken from material published by the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation. Contributing Authors include Dr. Jeffrey Mitchell, Dr Grady Bray, and Dr. George Everly. Specific references are given to cite works by each. Complete training in Critical Incident Stress is available from ICISF.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

The opportunity for ministry by a chaplain to firefighters is a result of the unique work environment and the unique personalities and needs of those involved. A basic understanding of the unique stressors present in firefighting and the stress responses presented by firefighters is important for the chaplain as he or she operates in this ministry assignment. This chapter will draw heavily upon materials published by Jeff Mitchell, Grady Bray, George Everly, and others connected to the International Critical Incident Stress Foundation (ICISF). The ICISF, located in Maryland, is dedicated to research and education connected to emergency services stress and stress management. Training seminars offering classes in stress management and training for interventions are scheduled by ICISF in all regions of the United States each year. It is strongly suggested that chaplains receive training and certification from ICISF and become active in local Critical Incident Stress Management teams which are comprised of emergency responders (peer supporters), mental health professionals, and trained clergy.

This chapter will provide a basis of understanding of critical incident stress management for fire chaplains. It will discuss some specifics of emergency services stress, describe stress signs, introduce stress survival skills, and talk about specific stress interventions. Much more information is available through publications listed at the end of this chapter.

## ***EMERGENCY SERVICES STRESS***

Firefighting, along with other emergency service occupations comprise some of our most challenging and potentially rewarding vocations. These jobs also carry some of the highest stressors offered in any field. Jeff Mitchell, PhD notes “there are few stressors in life that can have the destructive power associated with caring for the sick and injured... responsibility for the life and safety of others”.<sup>14</sup> There are many factors contributing to the prevalence of stress problems in firefighting, including stressors originating in the work itself, as well as stressors originating in the personalities of those doing the work – the firefighter.

## ***FIREFIGHTER PERSONALITY FACTORS***

Most firefighters, career or volunteer, have personalities that match the type of work required by firefighting; otherwise it would be

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<sup>14</sup> Mitchell, Jeffrey T., PhD and Grady P. Bray, PhD. *Emergency Services Stress*. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1990. Prentice Hall Inc.) 19.

intolerable for them. Firefighters have personalities that are different from the average person with a less demanding job. Although the personalities of individual firefighters will vary some, just like anyone else, a summary of personality characteristics is given below.

1. More interested in detail than people of other professions.
2. Pride themselves on a perfect job.
3. Frequently set personal standards that are extremely high.
4. Become quite frustrated when they encounter failure.
5. Usually have good internal references and are outgoing.
6. Motivated by internal factors like a job well done.
7. Less motivated by external factors such as money or promotions.
8. Action oriented.
9. Quick decision makers.
10. Task oriented.
11. Difficult time postponing gratification.
12. Most are easily bored.
13. Strong need to help others.
14. Difficult to say "no".
15. Extreme sense of dedication.
16. Need to be in control.
17. High need for stimulation.
18. Strong need to be needed.

Many of the personality factors listed above are what enable firefighters to be good at what they do. It should also be noted that some of the factors can create an opportunity for stress problems in the firefighter. Attention to detail helps in job performance, but also sets them up for the stress associated with failure to achieve unusually high expectations. They resent false calls because they feel their time is being wasted. Frustration arises when they are unable to use their skills to help others. Some of the same characteristics that enable them to be a good firefighter can ultimately cause stress problems and cripple their ability to stay a firefighter.

The factors listed above originate within the person. Other factors present stressors that originate from outside factors. Stress reactions to these factors can be divided into categories called acute stress, delayed acute stress, chronic stress, and accumulative stress.

## **ACUTE STRESS**

Also referred to as Critical Incident Stress, this is a stress reaction precipitated by a dramatic, overwhelmingly powerful experience. For emergency responders, Critical Incident Stress reactions are usually the result of one or more particularly difficult

calls. These calls become “critical” because they tend to overcome a person’s normal ability to cope. For firefighters and other responders who usually have well developed coping skills, the event must be far beyond “their” normal experience. Examples of critical incidents are:

1. Death to a fellow worker in the line of duty.
2. Serious injury to an emergency provider in the line of duty.
3. Working on a person who is a relative or close friend in serious condition.
4. Suicide involving an emergency worker.
5. A disaster.
6. A very violent person who has personally threatened the firefighter.
7. Almost any case with excessive media interest.
8. Direct contact with dead or severely injured children.
9. Death to a civilian caused by a firefighter.<sup>15</sup>

Some critical incidents may affect only a few or part of the responding crew. Other events will be powerful enough to affect nearly everyone involved. It has been reported that over 85% of emergency workers have experienced acute stress reactions after working a critical incident. Most reactions are only temporary lasting a few weeks. Some signs and symptoms may last several months, while a few individuals (less than 4%) may experience serious, long-lasting effects that impair job, family, health, and happiness. Stress reactions and signs usually begin to occur within 24 hours of an incident. A description of stress signs and symptoms is included later in this chapter.

## **DELAYED STRESS**

Signs and symptoms of acute stress from a critical incident may be delayed by days, weeks, months, or occasionally years after the occurrence. Delayed stress responses are still incident specific, but they are harder to identify since so much time has passed since the incident occurred. The person experiencing the stress may not connect the current signs to the past event at all. Also, the signs and symptoms may be exaggerated, distorted, or covered by the passing of time.

Delayed stress tends to be harder to resolve than simple acute stress. It has been around longer and has established roots. The person may have become accustomed and adjusted to some of the symptoms. Support from a professional therapist is often advised in the resolution of delayed stress.

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<sup>15</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 29.

## **CHRONIC STRESS**

There are many factors adding to the stress load of emergency workers that have little to do with individual critical incidents, but are related to everyday exposure to low-level stress. These stressors occur over time and often are not even noticed until unexplained symptoms show up in the firefighter's life.

Chronic stressors may include issues related to:

1. Family – difficulties related to shift work and conflict at home become a constant source of chronic stress.
2. Conflict – whether at home, work, or other social groups. Conflict with others coupled with the firefighter personality, which requires that others like them, can cause a serious stress load.
3. Work – shift work is inherently stressful disrupting sleep patterns and family schedules. Overloaded work conditions can be common in firefighting. Boredom can also be a factor for action-oriented firefighters.
4. Intrapersonal – this is stress that occurs when people are not living their lives the way or style that they believe it should be. Personal belief, faith issues, and values are conflicted with reality.

## **CUMULATIVE STRESS**

Often referred to as “burnout”, a more accurate and descriptive term is cumulative stress. The term implies a build-up of stress over a period of time. The build-up may include acute and chronic stressors that have not been resolved and so accumulate until “the cup is overflowing.” Cumulative stress reactions are difficult to recognize and resolve since they originate in so many different causes and time periods. The development of cumulative stress may occur over such a long period of time and in such small increments that it is not even noticed as it occurs. By the time it is noticed, firefighters with this type of stress may have already experienced marital problems, alcoholism, job difficulties, or other symptoms.

## ***SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF STRESS***

All types of stress detailed above will display signs and symptoms that can be recognized. Some signs are quite obvious and noticed by anyone. Others are subtler and may only be noticed by those closest to the person. Signals of distress are always

present and can be found when someone knows what to look for and where to look.<sup>16</sup>

It is important to remember that signs and symptoms of distress are normal reactions to unusual circumstances; they are not indicators of weakness, incompetence, or mental illness. Stress indicators come in different levels of intensity that usually match the intensity of the stressful event. Mild events produce mild signs; severe events produce more intense signs. The more severe signs, if ignored, will usually lead to illness or major disruption of the person's life.

Change is the most important indicator of distress. Change in an individual or group can be noticed in four areas:

1. Body or general health
2. The way a person thinks
3. The ways a person feels
4. The way a person acts

Any change in one or more of the above areas should be taken as a serious distress indicator. The greater the number of changes noticed in a firefighter, the greater the level of distress. Changes are normally temporary when firefighters are experiencing acute or delayed stress reactions. Permanent changes, often resulting from cumulative or chronic distress, may take a great deal of energy to turn around and often require professional intervention.

Appropriate response to early warning signs of distress may actually mitigate cumulative distress problems. Several interventions have been designed to help emergency service personnel deal with the effects of stress response.<sup>17</sup> Ignoring stress symptoms or thinking they will go away by themselves is dangerous to the health and well-being of the firefighter.

## **WARNING SIGNS OF CRITICAL INCIDENT (ACUTE) STRESS**

There are several of the signs and symptoms of acute stress reaction listed in the table below. The presence of just a few symptoms from one or more categories is enough to indicate a stress reaction. The chaplain should become familiar with the signs of acute stress, keeping in mind that many of the signs require evaluation of change in an individual. Presence of the signs listed below do not necessarily indicate physical or mental illness, they are normal reactions. Acute stress reaction signs normally occur during the incident or within twenty-four hours.<sup>18</sup> Other signs and

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<sup>16</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 39.

<sup>17</sup> Everly, George S. Jr. Ph.D., and Jeffery Mitchell, Ph.D., *Critical Incident Stress Management* (Ellicott City, Maryland, 1999, Chevron Publishing.) 71ff.

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 42.

symptoms may be present as well. The list below provides a reference for the most common signs.<sup>19</sup>

**STRESS SYMPTOMS**

PHYSICAL	COGNITIVE	EMOTIONAL	BEHAVIORAL	SPIRITUAL
Chest pain*	Blaming someone	Abandonment	Alcohol consumption	Acceptance or rejection of Providence
Chills	Confusion	Agitation	Antisocial acts*	Alienation
Diarrhea	Difficulty identifying familiar objects or people	Anger	Avoiding thoughts, feelings or situations related to the event	Anger directed to God
Difficulty breathing*	Disturbed thinking	Anxiety	Changes in activity	Awareness of the holy
Disorientation	Flashbacks	Apprehension	Changes in sexual functioning	Changes in religious observances
Dizziness	Heightened or lowered alertness	Denial	Changes in speech patterns	Confusion regarding God
Elevated blood pressure*	Hypervigilance	Depression	Changes in usual communications	Deepened spiritual awareness
Equilibrium problems	Impaired thinking	Emotional shock	Emotional outbursts	Emphasis on religious rites
Fainting*	Increased or decreased awareness of surroundings	Excessive worry	Erratic movements	Hyper-repentance
Fatigue	Intrusive images	Fear	Hyper-alert to environment	Imposed gratefulness
Grinding of teeth	Loss of time, place, or person orientation	Feeling helpless about life	Inability to relax	Increased emphasis on religion
Headaches	Memory problems	Feeling hopeless	Inability to rest	Isolation
Insomnia	Nightmares	Feeling overwhelmed	Loss or increase in appetite	Renewed search for meaning
Lower back pains	Overly critical of others	Flat affect—numbness	Nonspecific bodily complaints	Sense of abandonment
Muscle tremors	Overly sensitive	Grief	Pacing	Sense of betrayal
Nausea	Poor abstract thinking	Guilt	Silence	Sense of communion
Neck and shoulder pains	Poor attention	Inappropriate emotional response or lack of it	Startle reflex intensified	Sense of meaninglessness
Nightmares	Poor concentration	Intense anger	Suspiciousness	Sense of vocation in creation and providence
Profuse sweating	Poor decisions	Irritability	Withdrawal	
Rapid heart rate*	Poor problem solving	Loss of emotional control		
Shock symptoms*		Phobias		
Stomach problems		Rage		
Thirst		Resentment		
Twitches		Sever panic* (rare)		
Uncoordinated feeling		Uncertainty		
Visual difficulties				
Vomiting				
Weakness				

\*Requires immediate medical intervention

**WARNING SIGNS OF DELAYED STRESS**

Sometimes workers will not experience any noticeable signs or symptoms at the scene, but instead have them show up days or weeks after the event. Though the scene is long gone, the symptoms are just as real as if the event was still happening. Because of the time lapse however, the presence of the symptoms may be more confusing and feel very much out of place. Often, firefighters may not even connect delayed symptoms to a particular event making them even more vulnerable to significant health and wellness risk.

Delayed stress reactions are often characterized by the presence of intrusive images.<sup>20</sup> These may be bothersome thoughts that come to mind unwelcome, or may also include daydreams and nightmares. The dreams may be exact reproductions of the event, or a complete distortion of reality. They may often be powerful enough to wake someone from a sound sleep and produce physiological effects such as sweating, twitching, and upset stomach. Firefighters may also have intrusive images through auditory, visual, or smell impulses where they re-experience the

<sup>19</sup> ICISF Information Pamphlet, Online, ICISF.org.

<sup>20</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 44.

sight, sound, smell, or even taste of a previous incident even though they are no where near anything that could reproduce the situation. Re-experiences of the critical incident are called “flashbacks” and are like a dream except that the person is fully awake. They are an indication that the person’s mind is trying to work through the event in an effort to make sense of it.<sup>21</sup> All of these types of intrusive images are normal ways of working through delayed stress; they do not necessarily indicate weakness or psychosis. Talking with another person who is trained in critical incident stress support usually makes them go away more rapidly.

There are also many physical signs of delayed stress. Sleep disturbance characterized by inability to fall asleep or by waking several times during a night is the most common physical sign. Another physical sign is breaking out in a sweat if something reminds a firefighter of a critical incident. They may also have nausea, muscle tremors, or startle response. Occasionally people will experience a diminished sexual drive or inability to perform sexually as a symptom of delayed stress.

Emotional signs of delayed stress are often hidden and the person may not understand why they are feeling the way they are. Long after a critical event has passed, firefighters may experience feelings of depression or loss of emotional control and have difficulty connecting the reaction with the earlier event. Emotional responses may include:

- |                       |                       |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Intense grief         | Depression            |
| Sudden crying         | Feeling torn apart    |
| Sense of isolation    | Self-doubt            |
| Anger                 | Irritability          |
| Rage                  | Sense of hopelessness |
| Purposelessness       | General Anxiety       |
| Fear of future events | Guilt                 |

Reactions to delayed stress will also show up in a person’s behavior. These are often an outgrowth of the physical, emotional, and cognitive symptoms. A person who is feeling guilty and experiencing nausea and startle reflex may start avoiding contact with other people. Withdrawal from contact with others is the most common behavioral sign of delayed stress. Others may include angry outbursts, development of suspiciousness, becoming unusually silent or excessively talkative, or making excessive attempts at being funny. The biggest indicator is a noticeable shift from normal behavior for that person.

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<sup>21</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 45.

## **WARNING SIGNS OF CUMULATIVE/CHRONIC STRESS<sup>22</sup>**

Remember that accumulative stress reaction happens as a result of prolonged exposure to a great many stressors over a long period of time. The individual stressors may not be severe as in acute stress, but they are usually many and varied. Because cumulative stress happens over a long time period, it is very difficult to identify. Changes in a person may happen very subtly and slowly so that they are not noticeable to others or to the person themselves. The warning signs are usually experienced in four distinct phases.

### ***PHASE 1: WARNING***

Most signs in this phase are emotional in nature. They may take a year or more to grow and become noticeable. Signs will include:

- Vague anxiety
- Depression
- Boredom
- Apathy
- Emotional fatigue

Intervention at the early stages of this phase will usually head off further symptom development. Often all that is needed is a vacation, a change of pace or activity, and taking care of one's self.

### ***PHASE 2: MILD SYMPTOMS***

If the warning signs are not recognized and dealt with, they will set in and intensify. Over a period of six to eighteen months the symptoms will grow and new ones will be added. Some of the common signs in this phase include:

- More frequent loss of emotional control
- Sleep disturbances
- More frequent headaches, colds, or stomach problems
- Muscle aches
- Intensified physical and emotional fatigue
- Withdrawal from contact with others
- Irritability
- Intensifying depression

Intervention can still be possible and beneficial, but becomes more difficult as the person becomes more entrenched in the symptoms and they become more "normal" in his or her life.

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<sup>22</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 52ff.

### ***PHASE 3: ENTRENCHED CUMULATIVE STRESS REACTION***

If a person ignores the signs in phases one and two, some even more obvious symptoms will occur. By this time a person's career, family life, and personal happiness are in danger of lasting effects. The effects will normally include some of the following:

General physical and emotional fatigue	Intense depression
Increased alcohol/drug use	Increased smoking
Elevated blood pressure	Migraine headaches
Poor appetite	Loss of sexual drive
Ulcers	Intense irritability
Marital discord and relationship problems	Crying spells
Intense anxiety	Cardiac problems
Withdrawal from friends, family, co-workers	Restlessness
Sleeplessness	Rigid thinking
Skin rashes	

### ***PHASE 4: SEVERE/DEBILITATING CUMULATIVE STRESS REACTION***

By the time a person has reached phase four, professional intervention is necessary. The person may have become self-destructive as they have ignored many signs and symptoms for along period of time, perhaps four to five years. They are usually quite sick, emotionally and physically and have had severe impact on jobs and family. Most will have a number of the following:

Asthma	Coronary heart disease
Heart attacks	Diabetes
Cancer	Severe emotional depression
Lowered self-esteem	Lowered self-confidence
Inability to perform their job	Severe withdrawal
Uncontrolled emotions	Suicidal or homicidal thinking
Extreme chronic fatigue	Over reaction to minor events
Poor concentration	Frequent accidents
Forgetfulness	Feelings of hostility
Paranoia	

The phases will usually take from one to ten years to develop fully. Cumulative Stress Reaction is almost always preventable if people will take action in the early phases.

## ***STRESS SURVIVAL SKILLS***

The fire chaplain, in his or her role as a minister to firefighters should gain a good understanding of the signs and symptoms related to each of the stress reactions mentioned above. Beyond

that, it will be valuable for the chaplain to develop some intervention skills and knowledge in order to help a firefighter mitigate the effects of the stress reaction.

## **THE SHORT RESPONSE**

Surviving the emergency incident or the short response as related to stress is helped by proper training and equipment. When firefighters know what to do and how to do it, the stress reaction is lessened. Proper eating habits and appropriate exercise will keep the firefighter in physical condition to be able to perform in even in the worst possible conditions. Decisive, efficient, and effective leadership during an incident will also diminish the stress response. Open, frequent communication about the event needs to flow through the ranks and be updated regularly. Immediately after an event, equipment and crews should be put back into a state of readiness, taking care for all resources including equipment and people. A short rest period, a quick shower, a light meal followed by light exercise may all help personnel get back in service. Fluid replacement is critical, but be careful to avoid caffeine, sugar, and alcohol.

All of the above methods may seem quite basic, but are critical in lessening the acute stress response. The chaplain can observe and try to facilitate any or all of the ideas above as possible. In addition, urge firefighters to talk about a critical incident with trusted friends. Talking helps to clear the mind and puts things in perspective. The chaplain can encourage crews that a good job was done and that their efforts are appreciated. Crews may also benefit from a Critical Incident Defusing or Debriefing. These techniques will be mentioned later.

## **LONG TERM RESPONSE**

On prolonged responses, time orientation becomes very important. During a critical incident the time frame becomes altered. Regular time reorientation will help crews to increase their own internal monitoring of physical, mental, and emotional reserves.<sup>23</sup> Periodic rest and rotation of duty will also help lessen the stress response in firefighters. Shelter and removal from the immediate elements and exposure of the incident, as well as a chance to re-hydrate both also play important roles in longer term incidents.

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<sup>23</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 65.

## LIFELONG STRESS SURVIVAL SKILLS

In the very long term, there are life skills that are important for any emergency services worker. Proper diet is a major concern in stress management. If the foods firefighters are eating cause their health to deteriorate, or foods that increase their stress load, then they lower their tolerance to stress reactions (this is true for chaplains too!). A proper diet ensures that the nutritional resources for growth, healing, energy, and health are readily available, while limiting harmful substances such as refined sugars, processed flour, caffeine, alcohol, fats, and excessive salt, which almost always intensify stress.<sup>24</sup> Vitamins are also important to stress control. Vitamin C and the B-complex vitamins are essential to create the appropriate stress response in the body. These same vitamins can become depleted during a stress response, and so may need to be supplemented. The following dietary guidelines will be helpful to emergency service workers:<sup>25</sup>

1. Avoid sugar, salt, white bread, alcohol, and caffeine as much as possible.
2. Increase consumption of complex carbohydrates such as whole grain breads, granola, etc.
3. Dramatically reduce the intake of fatty foods. Avoid fried foods, nuts, fatty meats, chips, and other high fats.
4. Limit the foods that are high in cholesterol such as eggs, cheese, shrimp, crab, and butter.
5. Use polyunsaturated and monounsaturated fats instead of saturated fats.
6. Aim for a 50% reduction in refined sugars.
7. Reduce salt intake by 15 to 70%.
8. Try to eat only as many calories as are expended in a day.
9. If overweight, decrease food intake and increase exercise.
10. Increase consumption of fruits and vegetables and whole grains.
11. Substitute low-fat milk for whole milk.
12. Eat more fish and poultry.
13. Use multi-vitamin supplements, but don't over-do it.
14. Avoid crash diets.

Of course a good diet's constant companion is exercise. The benefits of exercise for emergency service workers are innumerable, but will include many things that make stress easier to handle. When the body is in shape to handle regular stressors, critical stressors are also easier to handle. The physiological stress

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<sup>24</sup> Matteson, M.T., and Ivancevich, J. *Managing Job Stress and Health*. (New York. 1982. Free Press).

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 106ff.

response in the body has been designed for physical activity. The most effective way to deal with stress is to utilize physical activity to quickly calm or channel the flood of chemicals in the body which are a natural part of the stress response.

The effects of the stress response go beyond the physical and have impact emotionally, cognitively, behaviorally, and spiritually. Dealing with stress then requires a person to tap internal resources as well. People can use their thinking process intentionally to categorize, remember, mentally visualize, and reduce the stress from everyday events and critical incidents. Other inner resources can be put into play through relaxation, deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, visual imagery, and meditation.

Spirituality is another significant resource in stress mediation. The fire chaplain may have special opportunity to minister in this area, helping firefighters access their own spiritual resources. It is important to remember that the chaplain's job is to help others work within their own spiritual reference, rather than imparting the minister's views. At the same time, the chaplain's own spirituality can be shared as a resource with others through the special relationship of ministry. Personal belief systems can be very effective as a method of stress reduction.<sup>26</sup> Trying to deal with the stress reaction while ignoring the spiritual element can result in those affected feeling off balance. The *whole* person is impacted by stress; the *whole* person needs to recover.

Life in emergency service can be a life with repeated exposure to critical incident stress and on-going exposure to chronic stressors. Dealing with all of these appropriately and utilizing the resources available will be necessary to the firefighter who wants to maintain a healthy life on and off the job. Balance between work and life beyond the job, learning to use relationships appropriately, and learning to talk about stress experiences will go a long way in taking the firefighter to a happy career and healthy retirement.

## ***STRESS INTERVENTIONS***

Critical Incident Stress Management is a multi-faceted approach as designed by the ICISF consisting of seven core interventions. They are:

1. Pre-incident preparedness training
2. One-on-one individual psychological support
3. Demobilizations and Group informational meetings
4. Critical Incident Stress Debriefings
5. Defusing
6. Family support
7. Referral mechanisms

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<sup>26</sup> Mitchell & Bray, 118.

Detailed descriptions and training in each of the interventions above can be obtained through the ICISF. Chaplains wishing to develop skills and learn to use these interventions in their ministry should contact ICISF for certified training opportunities. Training schedules and other information on Critical Incident Stress can be found on the Internet at [www.icisf.org](http://www.icisf.org). A brief description of the interventions will be given here as an introduction for fire chaplains. Most fire departments across the nation will be familiar with CISM and it will serve the chaplain well to at least understand the basics of stress intervention.

All of the methods here should be administered by those with specific training in Critical Incident Stress Management. The goals of all of the interventions mentioned are to:

1. Reduce the incidence, duration, and severity of, or impairment from, traumatic stress arising from crisis and disaster situations and
2. Facilitate access to formal mental health assessment and treatment, if needed.<sup>27</sup>

## **PRE-CRISIS PREPARATION**

As is obvious from the name, this intervention occurs before a crisis event takes place. It can be done with any group or organization determined to be exposed to a crisis event. The format is basically teaching and information dissemination and also includes setting self-expectations and developing improved coping skills.

## **ONE ON ONE CRISIS INTERVENTION**

This can occur anytime and anywhere. It is usually symptom driven, meaning it is appropriate whenever signs and symptoms of stress arise. A trained individual will spend one on one time with the person being affected with the goal of mitigating symptoms and helping the person return to normal functioning, if possible. It may also include referral to more in-depth support.

## **DEMOBILIZATIONS AND GROUP INFORMATIONAL BRIEFINGS**

These happen with larger groups of emergency service workers who are coming off shift or with large groups such as schools, businesses, and civilian groups after a large event. Symptoms do not have to be present to prompt a demobilization meeting. They

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<sup>27</sup> Everly & Mitchell. 79.

can be part of a pro-active plan to care for workers and public groups. The aim is to inform and consult in matters of stress. It will allow for psychological decompression when coming off an intense scene and help workers plan for self-care.

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS DEBRIEFING**

A CISD will occur one to ten days (or up to 4 weeks for mass disasters) post incident. They are usually symptom driven, but can be simply planned after an event. A trained team will lead a small group through a prescribed pattern designed to facilitate closure and mitigate symptoms. It will also provide a medium for psychological triage and appropriate referral where needed. A CISD will be attended only by those emergency workers who were on scene and led by a group of trained peers and professionals.

## **DEFUSING**

Defusings are also designed for small groups containing those who were intimately involved on a crisis scene. They can be led by one or two trained individuals and occur immediately (usually within 12 hours) of the event. The goal is to mitigate symptoms that are already occurring or will occur in the next few days and to either provide closure or to set up for successful debriefing later. It also provides a place and time for triage of those involved in the event.

## **FAMILY AND ORGANIZATIONAL CISM**

Here the systems and methods of CISM are expanded to meet the needs of family of emergency service workers and to work with entire organizations effected by crisis. These interventions can occur anytime and are usually either symptom or event driven. Trained individuals will meet with individuals, small or large groups to foster support and communication, to mitigate symptoms and provide for closure. Building coping skills and referral to more in-depth support may also occur.

## **REFERRAL**

Individuals who receive training in CISM are often peers and not professional mental health caregivers. Learning how and when to refer and building a good referral list are important parts of CISM. CISM trained peers may meet with other workers, family, or others and be able to assess mental status with the ability to access higher levels of care.

## *CONCLUSION*

Care for the whole person is a goal of the fire chaplain. Physical, emotional, cognitive, mental, and spiritual symptoms do not usually present separately, but all jumbled together. For the chaplain to be effective in ministering to the firefighter, he or she should learn to use all of the tools available. CISM can become a valuable tool in ministry, but only if the chaplain learns to use it effectively. The material presented here is only designed to expose chaplains to the realm of CISM. From here chaplains are encouraged to receive basic CISM training and Pastoral Intervention training from ICISF. Contact ICISF or FFC for more information on training requirements and opportunities.

# FIREFIGHTER INJURY OR DEATH

*Editor's Note:*

*The information on firefighter injury and death protocols was developed by the Federation of Fire Chaplains and is included here in the form of Standard Operating Procedures for chaplains to personalize and use in their own setting.*

**OBJECTIVE:** To establish comprehensive procedures to be followed in the event of serious injury or line-of-duty death of a firefighter.

## ***SERIOUS INJURY/DEATH PROCEDURES***

If a series of events occurs during the course of an emergency incident whereby a serious injury has led, or may lead to the death of a firefighter, certain actions must be taken. These items are the direct responsibility of the Incident commander as soon as the immediate needs of the incident are accomplished.

In the event of circumstances as described above, the Incident Commander will perform the following actions:

- a) Secure the scene of the area where the incident occurred.
- b) Impound all equipment belonging to the injured firefighter and any other equipment that was involved in the injury. All clothing, equipment and other physical evidence that is impounded will be handled in the same manner as evidence from an arson or criminal investigation.
- c) Make a detailed written description of the condition of all safety equipment used by the injured firefighter.
- d) Make no media statements or releases
- e) Contact a fire department or police department photographer and have the scene of the injury and any related areas thoroughly photographed
- f) Establish a telephone link capability from the scene. The use of mobile cellular telephones is permissible for this purpose. For security and privacy, all personnel involved in responding to and assisting with the death or injury situation should be advised to use the telephone link and not radio communications.
- g) Notify the following individuals as appropriate through Dispatch and the department's chain of command:
  - i) Fire Chief
  - ii) Fire department investigative team
  - iii) Fire department Chaplain
  - iv) City Manager or Mayor
  - v) Public Safety Officer Benefit Program (when a death is confirmed).
- h) Identify witness to the injury and instruct them to complete a detailed written statement regarding all that they observed or did relating to the injury.
- i) Appoint the following positions:
  - i) **Hospital Liaison Officer** - The Incident Commander should appoint an individual who should go directly to the receiving hospital and maintain a liaison between the

hospital staff and the Incident Commander via the telephone link. The Hospital Liaison Officer should be responsible for the following until relieved:

- (1) Update the Incident Commander of any significant information relating to the firefighter's status or condition.
- (2) Assure that no press releases are made
- (3) Assure blood for blood gas testing is drawn as soon as possible.
- (4) Collect all personal articles carried by the firefighter should pronouncement of death occur.
- (5) Should death occur, inform hospital personnel of the necessity of preparing the body for an autopsy.
- (6) Assist in gathering and impounding all equipment and clothing worn by the firefighter. Impounded equipment and clothing will be secured at all times and turned over to the Incident Commander or to the investigative team at the earliest opportunity.
- (7) If the firefighter's family is at the hospital, the hospital liaison officer will work with them and hospital personnel to provide appropriate waiting facilities and as much information as possible on the condition of the injured firefighter. If death should occur, the liaison officer will explain the need for an autopsy to the family.
- (8) If the condition of the injured firefighter is such that the family may be at the hospital for a prolonged period of time, the liaison officer will coordinate with the fire chief and shift commanders to have firefighters standing by at the hospital to assist the family with any needs that may arise (food, contact of other family members, etc.).

**NOTE:** If it is possible for the family to visit their firefighter prior to the death, they most certainly should be afforded that opportunity. **IT IS THE FAMILY'S RIGHT** to visit their loved one. The Hospital Liaison officer or chaplain should "prepare" the family for what they might see in the emergency room and accompany the family into the room for the visit if the family requests it. **DO NOT BE OVERLY PROTECTIVE OF THE FAMILY.** There is a definite need to touch and hold the body while there is still life, and being present when death occurs can be comforting to the family.

- (9) Arrangements should be made for all medical bills relating to the services rendered to the deceased firefighter to be sent to the department for payment. The family should **NOT** receive any of these bills at their residence address.
  - (10) The Hospital Liaison Officer should check all documents that are signed at the hospital to insure that proper authorization for an autopsy has been executed and that all forms for the prompt completion of the death certificate are signed.
- ii) **Public Information Officer** - The PIO should assume the following duties until relieved:
- (1) Attempt to collect all of the facts of the incident as it developed.
  - (2) Make contact, preferably via telephone with the communications center and:
  - (3) Fill them in on the situation.
  - (4) Instruct them not to issue any statements to the media or anyone else.
  - (5) Begin to gather all pertinent and personal information on the victim.
  - (6) Begin to prepare a news release.
  - (7) Under no circumstances should a news release be issued until next-of-kin notification can be made and the proper authority has been given to issue a news release.
  - (8) Establish an Information Sector at the scene of the emergency. All media representatives will be directed to the Information Sector where the PIO will be in charge of keeping control of media activities and releasing information to them as authorized by the Incident Commander.
- iii) **Notification Officer** - If the situation allows for the use of a formal notification procedure, a notification officer will be appointed as soon as possible so he can make necessary preparations to complete the notification of the firefighter's next-of-kin.
- (1) **NOTIFICATION OF NEXT OF KIN**
- (a) Prompt, judicious notification of the next-of-kin is of the utmost importance in the case of a serious injury and/or line-of-duty death. Notification will be made by an official representative of the fire department through personal contact if possible. The official notification serves to assure the next-of-kin of the validity of the information concerning

- the injury or death. The Fire Chief is responsible for the notification unless he appoints a designee.
- (b) Notification **MUST ALWAYS** be made in person and never alone. The department chaplain, fire chief, psychologist, or another public safety survivor can appropriately accompany the informing officer. Whenever possible, the fire chief or other chief officer will respond as part of the notification team.
  - (c) If there is knowledge of a medical problem with an immediate survivor, medical personnel should be dispatched to the residence to coincide with the death notification. Medical personnel should be advised not to actually approach the house until notification personnel are on the scene.
  - (d) As soon as the firefighter's family sees the notification officer, they will know something is wrong. Notification personnel will ask to be admitted to the house. **NEVER** make a death notification on the doorstep. Gather everyone in the home and ask them to sit down. Inform them slowly and clearly of the information you have on the incident. Make sure to use the firefighter's name during the notification. If specifics of the incident are known, they should be provided to the family.
  - (e) If the firefighter has already died, relay that information. **NEVER** give the family a false sense of hope. Use words like "died" and "dead" rather than "gone away" or "passed away."
  - (f) If the personnel giving the notification have been seriously affected by the death, they should understand that showing emotions is perfectly acceptable.
  - (g) If there are young children in the home, the family may wish to leave them at home. Efforts should be made prior to arrival at the home to have babysitting resources available.
  - (h) If immediate family members are from out of town, death notification will be requested from the fire department in that area. Arrangements will be made to enable simultaneous telephone contact with the department notification officer.
  - (i) In addition to the surviving spouse, the surviving parents of a firefighter killed or seriously injured in the line of duty will be personally notified if they live in the immediate north Texas area.

- (j) The Notification Officer is responsible for making initial contact with the next-of-kin. This official notification must be made before any details of the death or injury are released to the news media. The Notification Officer should be prepared to assist the next-of-kin with the immediate emotional trauma associated with the notification. A friend of the family or a member of the clergy (Fire Department Chaplain) will be of valuable assistance at this time. The Notification Officer should be prepared to stay with the next-of-kin, if requested, until a family member or friend arrives. The Notification Officer will:
  - (k) If the situation permits, wear Class A dress uniform with tie. Regardless of the situation, the notification officer will present a professional appearance.
  - (l) Assign a fire department member to accompany him. Assigned fire department member will also wear dress uniform if possible.
  - (m) Have an official fire department identification card in his possession.
  - (n) Familiarize himself with the circumstances of the injury or death and the personal data concerning the deceased before making the notification. This may be done by contacting the Public Information Officer.
  - (o) Determine if the family has a particular person within the fire department they would prefer to act as a Family Liaison Officer.
  - (p) Once the notification has been made, the Notification Officer will advise Dispatch and the Public Information Officer. Dispatch should also receive an official press release from the PIO, preferably in writing. An official announcement may then be made and details may be released to the news media.

NOTE: In situations where a serious injury may lead to the death of a firefighter, it is extremely important to get his next-of-kin to the treating facility as quickly and safely as possible. In such situations, depending on the location of the firefighter's family, it may be necessary to arrange initial notification and transportation to the treating facility through an outside agency (local police, sheriff department, etc.). Should this occur, the

department notification officer will be on-hand at the hospital to meet the family upon arrival.

- (q) If the family wants to go to the hospital, they should be transported via department vehicle. It is highly recommended that the family NOT drive themselves to the hospital. Should there be serious resistance and the family insists on driving, have a department member accompany them in the car. The notification will notify the Incident Commander by telephone when the family is ready to depart for the hospital.

**iv) Survivor Action Officer**

The Fire Chief will assume the position of Survivor Action Officer or appoint someone to act as his representative in providing liaison and support with the family of a firefighter killed in the line of duty. The Survivor Action Officer is a special staff assignment. As a direct representative of the Fire Chief, the Survivor Action Officer should receive the full cooperation of the entire fire department. The Survivor Action Officer will appoint assistants and delegate responsibilities as required to successfully complete all assigned duties.

- (1) The Survivor Action Officer is responsible for the management of several important activities. His principal concern is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. He will render whatever assistance is necessary in settling the personal affairs of the deceased member and assisting the family through the crisis.
- (2) The Survivor Action Officer coordinates and supervises the activities of a number of key personnel assigned to handle the specific aspects of the funeral arrangements and to assist the surviving family. These key personnel include:
  - (a) Family Liaison Officer - On call to the surviving family 24 hours per day to provide any assistance and support needed. Provides the Survivor Action Officer with constant updates on the families status and needs.
  - (b) Funeral Officer - Provides coordination and interaction with the Funeral Director and other personnel on funeral arrangements.
  - (c) Church Officer - Provides coordination and interaction with the church involved to arrange the funeral service.

- (d) Cemetery Officer - Provides coordination and with the cemetery and others involved in the funeral arrangements in order to organize all arrangements at the grave site.
  - (e) Procession Officer - Arranges and directs the funeral procession.
- (3) Assure next-of-kin notification has been properly accomplished.
  - (4) Officially notify all fire department stations of the death and have flags lowered to half mast. Make arrangements for the notification of off-duty and vacationing personnel.
  - (5) Notify the following personnel and agencies of the death:
    - (a) Fire Fighters Association President.
    - (b) All other city departments.
    - (c) All other fire departments and police departments.
  - (6) Make appropriate follow-up contacts when the funeral arrangements and schedules have been determined.
  - (7) Work with the Family Liaison Officer to determine the desired method of collecting the deceased firefighters personal items from the fire station.  
**NOTE:** If the next-of-kin desires to collect items from the locker personally, the contents should be screened in advance and any inappropriate material removed.
  - (8) Conduct a coordination meeting with the key personnel as soon as possible so that everyone understands what options will be used in the funeral ceremony. Once the funeral procedures are established all key personnel should be instructed to make the appropriate contacts and given the time for a final coordination meeting. Conduct a final coordination meeting with key personnel to:
    - (a) Establish schedule and timetables.
    - (b) Identify times and places for group gatherings as required by the ceremonies to be conducted.
    - (c) Re-contact all appropriate people and agencies with the schedule, meeting places, and special instructions.
  - (9) Be a key contact person for outside agencies, news media, and other departments in relation to the death and subsequent ceremonies.
  - (10) Make appropriate arrangements for a post-funeral meal and facility to handle a large group of people (with family approval through the Family

Liaison Officer). Arrangements will also be made for a fire department member to be on hand at the residence to assist the family in any manner possible. Additional meals for immediate family members will also be provided as needed.

- (11) Coordinate with the Human Resources Department to arrange for final paycheck and the completion of any required paperwork.
  - (12) Contact neighboring fire departments and arrange for mutual aid stand-in fire and ambulance companies during the funeral.
  - (13) Maintain and easily accessible contact position for the duration of the funeral process.
  - (14) Coordinate providing meals for the family and assure future family follow-up by the Family Liaison Officer.
  - (15) Assure that all department functions return to normal.
- v) **Family Liaison Officer** In every incident involving the death of a firefighter, or when the death of an injured firefighter appears imminent, a Family Liaison Officer will be assigned by the Fire Chief. The individual so assigned will perform the following duties:
- (1) The Family Liaison Officer will have a fire department vehicle, pager, and portable radio assigned to him for the entire funeral process.
  - (2) Promptly report to the deceased residence, or to the treating medical facility, and provide reassurance and support to the family. The Family Liaison Officer is to insure that the **NEEDS OF THE FAMILY** come before the wishes of the department.
  - (3) The Family Liaison Officer must be prepared to discuss all aspects of the funeral process and counsel the family in its decisions. The FLO must be able to relay information to the Fire Chief as to what level of involvement the department will have in the funeral process in accordance with the family's wishes.
  - (4) The FLO will make the family aware of what the department can offer in the way of assistance if the family decides to have a "line-of-duty" funeral.
  - (5) The family should be made aware of churches with seating capacities large enough to accommodate attendance at the funeral. However, any alternate churches will need to be made aware that the family

minister or fire department chaplain will officiate at the service. **THE DEPARTMENT WILL ONLY MAKE THE FAMILY AWARE OF THE ALTERNATIVES. IT IS THE FAMILY'S CHOICE.**

- (6) The FLO will brief the family on fire department funeral procedures (i.e., 21-gun salute, presenting of the flag, playing of taps, last alarm, the ladder archway, etc.).
- (7) The FLO will see that the surviving parents, if not the immediate next-of-kin, are afforded proper recognition and have proper placement arranged for them during the funeral and funeral procession.
- (8) The Family Liaison Officer will assist the family in determining the six or eight primary pallbearers and the optional honorary bearers.
- (9) The Family Liaison Officer will assist the family in determining:
  - (a) Type of interment.
  - (b) Which funeral home will be used.
  - (c) Which clergy will be used (whether or not the Fire Department Chaplain will be used).
  - (d) Which cemetery will be used.
  - (e) Will the deceased be buried in uniform? If so, obtain a uniform.
  - (f) Obtain all articles of clothing that the deceased will wear and deliver them to the funeral director.
  - (g) Obtain a recent photograph of the deceased for the funeral director.
  - (h) Determine the length of the funeral service to include:
    - (i) Readers of scripture.
    - (ii) What scriptures will be read.
    - (iii) Music to be used and individuals to perform the music.
    - (iv) Who will deliver the funeral sermon and/or eulogy.
    - (v) Will "Last Alarm" bell service be used.
  - (i) Length of the wake and establishing a tentative schedule.
  - (j) Ceremonies that will take place at the cemetery.
    - (i) Band
    - (ii) Honor Guard/Firing Squad
    - (iii) Readings
    - (iv) Eulogy and who will deliver it
    - (v) Taps

- (vi) Will a pumper be used as a caisson or will a conventional hearse be used
- (vii) Will a pumper or ladder truck be used as a flower car
- (viii) Will personnel walk alongside the caisson or ride in the procession
- (k) Identify and determine any other special considerations on behalf of the family.
- (10) The Family Liaison Officer will be available to the family on a 24-hour basis to assist in any way necessary.
- (11) The Family Liaison Officer will also have to address the following items with the family:
  - (a) Autopsy report, birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates (worker's compensation), VA or military records.
  - (b) Consult an attorney for the family to review all matters.
  - (c) Fire department retirement benefits due to surviving beneficiaries.
  - (d) VA widow and children's benefits and burial benefits.
  - (e) Social Security survivor benefits.
  - (f) Public Safety Officer Benefits (federal and state).
  - (g) Life insurance plans (personal and city).
  - (h) Final paycheck, including sick leave, vacation payoff, and W-2 forms.
  - (i) Deferred compensation account.
  - (j) Income tax report.
  - (k) Loans outstanding that may be insured, including credit union loans.
  - (l) Transfer of ownership of property and vehicles to survivors.
  - (m) Review of all bills before payment by survivors for legality, honesty, and accuracy. This should include last illness, previous debts, and funeral expenses. Some bills may be covered by insurance or otherwise not be legally due.
  - (n) Change title of all bank accounts.
  - (o) Advise survivors not to loan money to any person, especially friends and relatives. Advise them to put any available funds in the bank. There will be ample time to invest wisely after a greater degree of stability returns to their life.
  - (p) Investigate the possibility of scholarships available for college for surviving dependents.

- (q) Check on mortgage insurance.
  - (r) Check on possible worker's compensation claims with an attorney.
  - (s) Check on any possible third party lawsuits with an attorney. For example, the surviving family of a firefighter at a fire that is hit by a vehicle may be able to sue the operator of the vehicle.
- (12) The Family Liaison Officer must be constantly alert for ways he can assist the family of a fallen firefighter to cope with the tragedy that has entered their life. Any special needs that are noticed should be relayed to the Fire Chief immediately so that the necessary resources to meet those needs can be acquired.

## ***INVESTIGATION OF SERIOUS INJURIES AND LINE-OF-DUTY DEATHS***

The Fire Department will conduct a thorough investigation of all line-of-duty deaths and serious injuries to department members.

- a) A line-of-duty death is defined as any death that occurs to a department member while on duty.
- b) A serious injury is defined as an injury that is life-threatening and results in prolonged hospitalization and treatment, and/or that results in substantial permanent disability to the department member injured.
- c) Investigation Objectives - The primary objective of the investigation will be to prevent future occurrences of a similar nature by identifying:
  - i) Inadequacies involving apparatus, equipment, protective clothing, S.O.P.'s, supervision, training, or performance.
  - ii) Situations that involve an unacceptable level of risk.
  - iii) Previously unknown or unanticipated hazards.
  - iv) Actions to address problems or situations that are discovered.

The concern over discovery will not restrain the department from taking corrective action to avoid another incident.
- d) Additional objectives will include:
  - i) Obtaining Public Safety Officer Benefits for the surviving family.
  - ii) Determining the potential for criminal or civil negligence.

- iii) Complete documentation of the incident and the preservation of all evidence involved.
- iv) Assist family members and all involved in the incident in understanding what happened.
- v) Providing information to health and safety organizations.
- e) Investigation Team - The fire chief will appoint an investigation team consisting of 3 to 5 members of the department and/or outside agencies.
  - i) The team leader will be a command level member of the department.
  - ii) The fire department safety officer will be assigned to the team.
  - iii) Individuals will be named to the team who are trained and qualified in investigative procedures.
  - iv) Depending on the situation, individual(s) with areas of special expertise may also be placed on the team.
- f) Investigation Actions
  - i) Immediate Actions - actions taken on the scene by the incident commander and other personnel assigned by the incident commander. These actions include:
    - (1) Isolating the scene from unauthorized personnel until on-scene information and evidence is impounded/collected.
    - (2) Impounding all equipment, clothing, and other materials that may be used as evidence.
    - (3) Recording the condition of any safety equipment used by the injured firefighter.
    - (4) Photographing the scene of the injury and all related areas.
    - (5) Identifying witnesses and ordering written statements.
  - ii) Second-Stage Actions - actions completed by the investigation team to form a complete report on the death/injury to the firefighter.
    - (1) Conduct interviews of witnesses, personnel involved in the incident, persons with specialized knowledge, etc.
    - (2) Obtain and thoroughly research all records of the incident and related documentation including written statements, computer-generated reports/logs, audio recordings of radio traffic, video footage taken during the incident, photographs, training records, S.O.P.'s, pre-plans, etc.
    - (3) Develop a detailed time line of all actions taken by all units/personnel operating on the scene. (Sample attached.)
    - (4) Examine all physical evidence. Obtain expert assistance as needed from:

- (a) Fire Investigator( s)
  - (b) Medical Examiner
  - (c) OSHA/NIOSH
  - (d) Insurance Carrier(s)
  - (e) USFA
  - (f) NFPA
  - (g) IAFC/IAFF
  - (h) DOT/NTSB
  - (i) Other local, state, and federal agencies.
- (5) Obtain legal advice as needed.
- g) Investigation Questions - The Investigation will develop answers to the following questions:
- i) Were individuals involved in the incident properly trained?  
(Records will be examined to determine if the individuals involved had received proper training in relevant topics.)
  - ii) Did training provide the desired actions and/or behavior?
  - iii) Were the procedures followed valid?
    - (1) Trace actions taken back to decisions.
    - (2) Determine reasons for making decisions.
    - (3) Were decisions made on the basis of information that was available, or not available?
    - (4) Was the training and experience level of personnel involved adequate for the tasks assigned?
  - iv) Were problems encountered known, suspected, or anticipated?
  - v) What needs to be changed?
  - vi) Are product liability issues involved?
- h) Investigation Report - Upon completion of all investigative actions, the investigation team will compile a written report. The report will provide an understanding of the events leading up to the death/injury and will contain the following information:
- i) A complete listing of all factors contributing to the death/injury.
  - ii) A following of all contributing factors to their resulting decisions/actions and outcomes.
  - iii) An evaluation as to the major contributing factor(s).
  - iv) Recommendations on changes in department procedures or activities to prevent recurrence of similar death/injury.
  - v) Supporting materials used as the basis for investigation, evaluation, and recommendations.
  - vi) In making their evaluation and recommendations, team members will take care to differentiate between facts, expert opinion, and speculation. Conclusions will be drawn from supported assumptions.

- vii) The investigation will attempt to separate the emotions surrounding the incident from the facts and present an unbiased analysis of the incident. No aspect of the report should be based on or unduly affected by:
  - (1) Reputations of individuals or the department.
  - (2) Fear or litigation or prosecution.
  - (3) Critical incident stress.
  - (4) Guilt or denial.
  - (5) Media attention.
  - (6) Hidden agendas.

Any members of the investigation team who find that their judgement or objectivity is or may be affected by the above factors will make this known to the fire chief so that a replacement may be appointed.

- viii) Upon completion, the investigation team will present its report to the following people:
  - (1) Fire department chief and staff.
  - (2) Health/Safety committees.
  - (3) Involved fire department members.
  - (4) Deceased firefighter's next-of-kin.
- ix) Additional release of information contained in the investigation team report will be subject to applicable privacy and open record laws.

The investigation file, including the investigation report, supporting materials, and evidence, will be maintained by the fire department for a period of twenty (20) years from the date of the death. In the case of serious injury, the file will be maintained for the life of the injured firefighter plus twenty (20) years.



# CHAPLAINS MANUAL

## FIRE DEPARTMENT

### FUNERALS

#### *Acknowledgement*

*The Federation of Fire Chaplains would like to acknowledge its partnership with the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. Through this partnership, both organizations are better able to meet the needs of the fire service family. The Foundation offers extensive grief-related resources to the survivors of firefighters killed and seriously injured in the line of duty. Out of its work with the survivors, came the suggestion for development of Taking Care of Our Own, a training program to help senior fire officers better prepare for the loss of a firefighter in the line of duty.*

*The Federation would also like to thank the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation for its assistance in the printing of this valuable resource.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

No one likes to consider the prospect of arranging and conducting a funeral or memorial service for someone who has touched our lives. As fire chaplains, however, we serve a group of brave and dedicated men and women who continually place themselves in harm's way. Far too often they make the ultimate sacrifice. They give their lives as they strive to protect the lives and property of the communities they serve.

When the unthinkable happens, it is up to the chaplain to do all he or she can to ensure that the fallen firefighter receives a tribute befitting the sacrifice. In this regard, no effort is too large, and no detail is too small. It is truly a time for "all things to be done decently and in order." The purpose of this manual is to provide basic information that a chaplain can use to help the department through a very trying time. It should also be part of a Standard Operating Procedure on how to handle all aspects of the death of a firefighter.

This manual is not intended to be all-inclusive in content or to present only one approach. Instead, it provides information covering a broad spectrum of subjects. This information comes from many sources and from what departments and families of fallen firefighters recommended. From this information, the chaplain may choose what best fits a particular situation and adapt it as necessary.

There are two keys to conducting a proper fire department funeral: showing honor to the fallen firefighter, and caring for those left behind. If the chaplain accomplishes these two things, the chaplain has done his or her job well.

## ***CHAPTER 1: GENERAL GUIDELINES***

- 1.1 When a member of the Fire, Emergency Medical or Rescue Services dies in the line of duty, several considerations are crucial for those dealing with the tragedy. These include:
1. Identifying and meeting the needs of the surviving family
  2. Ensuring that the needs and wishes of the family always come before the needs and wishes of the department
  3. Providing ongoing emotional and spiritual support for the next of kin
  4. Using good organization, coordination and communication
  5. Maintaining flexibility
  6. Monitoring constantly not to overload any individuals
- 1.2 The primary goal of the fire department should be to work with the family, the funeral director and others involved ensuring that the fallen firefighter receives a fitting tribute. At all times the fire

department must carry out the wishes and desires of the surviving family regarding the funeral ceremonies.

- 1.3 The fire department's responsibilities are not the same as those of the funeral director. Fire department personnel should work with the funeral director in the best interest of the firefighter's family.

## ***CHAPTER 2: PRE-INCIDENT PLANNING***

Pre-planning is essential to ensure the department meets the needs of the family and coworkers.

2.1 Fire Department Chaplain - The department should maintain an active chaplaincy program. The chaplain should be contacted immediately whenever the death of a fire department member is imminent or confirmed, regardless of the circumstances involved. The chaplain's services will be available to the surviving family before, during and after the funeral.

2.2 Personnel Information – The department should maintain an Emergency Employee Contact Information Record on all department personnel. The department will use it to assist in the treatment of personnel following serious injury, and in the notification of next of kin following a serious injury or line-of-duty death. The form will contain the following information:

- a. Complete name of the department member
- b. Name and address of next of kin with specific directions to the address as needed
- c. Names of parents and children/dependents, including those who may not live with the firefighter
- d. The firefighter's religion and church affiliation and membership ***Appendix 1*** contains a sample Emergency Employee Contact Information form created by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation.

2.3 Photographs - The department should arrange for individual photographs of all department personnel and should maintain current photographs in department personnel files. The photos may be needed for immediate identification after an incident. After a line-of-duty death, there will be requests for photos from the media and other sources.

2.4 Local Support Agencies - The department should periodically contact local public safety agencies to maintain a current resource list of:

- a. Honor Guard and Color Guard
- b. Bands, buglers, pipers
- c. Firing parties
- d. Vocal and instrumental performers

2.5 Funeral Directors – The department should contact and provide the local funeral directors a copy of the department’s funeral procedures. This will allow them to understand local protocols before a line-of-duty death occurs.

2.6 Ceremonial Clothing and Equipment - The department should have the following available for use during fire department funerals:

- a. Badge and name tag presentation frame
- b. An extra badge for each rank in the department as well as the name of a source for obtaining a duplicate name tag on an emergency basis
- c. Presentation flags (U.S., state, municipality, fire department)
- d. White gloves in sufficient numbers for the Honor Guard and eight pallbearers

2.7 Key Positions - The department should maintain and annually update a list of personnel selected to serve in the following key positions:

- a. Survivor Action Officer
- b. Notification Officer
- c. Family Liaison Officer
- d. Hospital Liaison Officer
- e. Funeral or Memorial Service Officer
- f. Procession Officer
- g. Service Officer
- h. Final Committal Officer

Personnel selected to serve should receive a manual and training on the responsibilities of key positions. The manual should contain copies of fire department procedures relating to funerals or memorial services.

2.8 Honor Guard and Color Guard - The department should encourage personnel to participate in a department Honor Guard and Color Guard that will function during fire department funerals and at other appropriate times. If possible, the department should provide the following:

- a. Class A ("dress") uniforms with cap, white shirt, black tie, and white ascot, for all members
- b. White gloves for all members
- c. White shoulder braiding for all members
- d. Patent leather low-quarter shoes for all members

- e. Parade flags (U.S., state, municipality and fire department) with holders
- f. Two display axes with chrome or brass heads

Career departments should establish an official leave policy to allow members to provide these services.

## ***CHAPTER 3: FUNERAL TYPES***

The death of a firefighter may occur under a variety of circumstances. Based on the circumstances, the department should provide appropriate services from the planning of the funeral through the survivor follow-up process. To ensure all fallen firefighters are honored in a consistent manner, the department should adopt a policy on the types of services it will provide. The following policy is an example of what one state has adopted.

### 3.1 Definitions

- a. Line-of-duty: The death must be the result of a traumatic injury suffered in the line of duty.
- b. Job-related traumatic injury: A blow to the body by an outside force, e.g., crushing injuries suffered in a building collapse, apparatus accident or fall.
- c. Burns, smoke inhalation and such climactic injuries as heatstroke or frostbite are considered traumatic injuries.
- d. Job-related non-traumatic injury: A non-traumatic injury that is strongly believed or has been proven to be attributable to the job. Examples are stress, heart attacks, strokes, diseases and mental illness (suicide).
- e. Active member: A full-time or volunteer member of a fire or emergency medical service agency serving in an active capacity.
- f. Inactive member: A retired or former member of a fire or emergency medical service agency.
- g. Affiliate member: An individual who has served in some capacity with the department, such as a commissioner, trustee, dispatcher, etc.
- h. Non-job-related death: Deaths, natural and traumatic, that are not related to fire or emergency medical service duty.

### 3.2 Types of Services

- a. Level One: A line-of-duty or job-related death. This may include an inactive member whose death has stemmed from an injury sustained during active duty.
- b. Level Two: A non-job-related death of an active member.

- c. Level Three: A non-job-related death of an inactive or affiliate member.

### 3.3 SUGGESTED FUNERAL SERVICE OPTIONS

LEVEL ONE	LEVEL TWO	LEVEL THREE
American Flag	American Flag	American Flag
Badge Shrouds	Badge Shrouds	Badge Shrouds
Bagpipers		
Bell Service	Bell Service	Bell Service
Bugler		
Color Guard		
Crossed Ladders		
Eulogy	Eulogy	
Fire Engine caisson	Hearse	Hearse
Fire Service Flag	Fre Service Flag	Fire Service Flag
Flower Unit	Flower Unit	
Honor Guard	Honor Guard	Honor Guard
Honor Detail	Honor Detail	
Pallbearers – active	Pallbearers – honorary	Pallbearers - honorary
Station Bunting	Station Bunting	Station Bunting
Vehicle Bunting	Vehicle Bunting	
Walkthrough	Walkthrough	Walkthrough

## ***CHAPTER 4: FUNERAL OR MEMORIAL SERVICE PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS***

There are many ways for the department to offer help for the funeral or memorial service. Some families will welcome all offers of help, while others may choose to have no departmental involvement. The family must always be allowed to make that choice.

4.1 Honor Guard – If the family requests an Honor Guard, the Funeral Officer should coordinate with Honor Guard personnel to schedule Honor Guard activities according to the family’s and funeral director's wishes. The following basic rules apply to these activities:

- a. Two Honor Guard members should be posted at the casket. During viewing hours, they should be posted at the head and at the foot.

- b. There should be a minimum of four Honor Guard members for each set of viewing hours.
- c. Honor Guard members should rotate at 15-minute intervals. Relief guards should march up together. Posted guards should come to attention and smartly make the transfer and then march off together.
- d. Posted Honor Guard should assume the position of parade rest.
- e. American and department flags (or a state flag, if there is no departmental flag) should be posted at the casket.
- f. Honor Guard members should wear Class A uniform, if available, with white gloves. They should use black mourning bands over uniform badges. If a department does not have Class A uniforms, dress uniforms are an acceptable option.

4.2 Pallbearers - Should the family choose to use department members as pallbearers, it is the Family Liaison Officer's responsibility to ask which firefighters the family would like to use.

There should be between six and eight pallbearers. They should wear Class A uniforms with hats and white gloves.

- a. Due to their specific responsibilities, pallbearers are exempt from following the majority of orders given to the remainder of the formation.
- b. The Funeral Officer, assisted by the Funeral Director, should give instructions on removing, handling, and transporting the casket. If a fire engine serves as a caisson, pallbearers should hold a practice session the day before the funeral. If this is not possible, pallbearers should report to the funeral home several hours before the beginning of the service for a protocol briefing and practice.
- c. If the casket is draped with a flag to present to the next of kin, three pallbearers will be instructed on the proper method of removing, folding, and presenting the flag. Two pallbearers will fold the flag and present it to the third pallbearer who, in turn, will present it to the next of kin. The Final Committal Officer will coordinate the flag folding. Flag folding instructions appear in **Appendix 8**. If the casket is not draped with a flag, the department can present a prefolded flag to the next of kin.
- d. If fire department engines serve as caisson and flower vehicle, pallbearers should ride on them. If engines are not used, the department will provide the pallbearers other department vehicles for the procession.

#### 4.3 Transportation

- a. The department should offer a fire department vehicle and

driver to the immediate family during the viewing and funeral period. The Family Liaison Officer normally arranges for this service.

- b. The department should ensure that the next of kin have limousine service available on the day of the funeral.

4.4 Meals – The department should plan to provide meals for the deceased firefighter’s family at least until after the funeral. Friends of the family and members of the department and auxiliaries may help provide these meals. The Survivor Action Officer, in conjunction with the Family Liaison Officer, will determine the need and coordinate providing the meals.

4.5 Family Liaison Officer - Regardless of the circumstances surrounding the death, or the deceased firefighter's status in the department, a Family Liaison Officer should be assigned to make contact with the family. The officer will determine the amount of involvement the family wants from the department. The officer will provide this information to the Survivor Action Officer. The Family Liaison Officer will assist the family throughout the process.

4.6 Initial Family Support - The department will determine this based on the family requests as relayed by the Family Liaison Officer. The department should assign appropriate key personnel as the needs arise. **The department should not act on assumptions without contacting and getting the consent of the immediate family.**

4.7 Fire Department Chaplain - The amount of involvement the chaplain has will be determined by the family. One option is a shared responsibility between the family’s clergy and the department chaplain. Should the department chaplain be requested, the following are areas of responsibility:

- a. Comfort and support for family members
- b. Prayer services at the funeral home
- c. Church services
- d. Final committal
- e. Follow-up support for the family
- f. Departmental or community memorial services

4.8 Procession - The family may request a procession from the funeral home or church to the place of final committal. The procession involves staging vehicles at the funeral home or church prior to the funeral, directing vehicles as they leave for the place of final committal, and staging of vehicles upon arrival there. Specific considerations include:

- a. Department vehicles used as caisson, flower car, and for

transportation

- b. Coordination with the funeral director to determine the procession route, including a drive by the deceased firefighter's fire station or home. If the procession passes the fire station, apparatus should be parked on the apron. Firefighters on duty should assemble outside, come to attention as the procession passes, and toll a muffled bell as the caisson or hearse passes.
- c. Static displays of apparatus along the procession route
- d. Crossed ladders or aerial equipment at the funeral home, church, or place of final committal entrance

4.9 Caisson - A fire department engine may be appropriate as a caisson to carry the casket. If an engine is used, personnel must take it out of service for a period of time and prepare it as follows:

- a. Thoroughly wash and wax the engine.
- b. Remove hoses and dividers.
- c. Add available mourning flags or bunting.
- a. The operator of the engine should be in dress uniform.

In the event of inclement weather, an enclosed hearse should carry the casket and the apparatus should serve as a flower car.

4.10 Flower Car - A fire department engine may also serve as a flower vehicle. If so, personnel must take it out of service and prepare it as indicated above for a caisson. Hoses and dividers need not be removed.

4.11 Formations - Special formations may be appropriate at the following points:

- a. Walkthrough of all attending firefighters at the funeral home or church Honor Guard formations on either side of the casket's path from the funeral home to the hearse or caisson
- b. Honor Guard formations on either side of the casket path during entry to and exit from the church
- c. Honor Guard formations on either side of the casket path from the hearse or caisson to the place of final committal.

4.12 Taps - Taps may be sounded by one or more buglers at the place of final committal. The location of the bugler should be approximately 75 feet from the final committal site.

4.13 Firing Party - A military-type firing party may be used at the final committal. If so, the party will fire three volleys 75 feet from the final committal site. This type of salute may startle people at the service, especially in times of heightened national security. The family should be aware of this.

#### 4.14 Musical Selections

- a. A band, a piper, an organist, a choir or soloists may play or sing during various funeral ceremonies.
- a. The Family Liaison officer should discuss this option with the family and communicate its wishes to the Funeral Officer.

4.15 Last Alarm Service - A traditional bell-ringing ceremony at the end of the church service or committal service usually signifies the firefighter's last alarm. A short reading accompanies the ringing of the bell. (*See Appendix 9*)

4.16 Readings - Numerous scripture passages and fire-service-related readings are appropriate during the funeral services. The Family Liaison Officer will work with the family to determine if they would like any readings and who should read them.

4.17 Eulogy - A eulogy may be appropriate at any point in the funeral ceremonies. The family should decide who will deliver the eulogy and when it is fitting. The Fire Chief, a clergy member, the department chaplain, or a close family friend from the fire department may be asked to perform this task. The Family Liaison Officer will make the necessary contacts and advise the Funeral Officer. (*See Appendix 2 for information on how to prepare a fire service eulogy.*)

4.18 Crossed Aerial Ladders - If the family wishes to have the crossed aerial ladders at the entrance to the final committal site, the Family Liaison Officer will forward this request to the Survivor Action Officer for approval and coordination.

4.19 Static Equipment Display - During the processions, the family may choose to have a static display of department apparatus and crews at attention and saluting the passing casket and family vehicle. This final tribute may be set up at the funeral home or church, at key locations along the procession route, at a fire station on the procession route, or at the place of final committal entrance. The Family Liaison Officer will communicate this request to the Survivor Action Officer.

4.20 Burial In Uniform - If the family chooses to bury the deceased firefighter in the departmental uniform, the Family Liaison Officer will deliver the uniform to the Funeral Officer or funeral director. If the family selects non-departmental clothing, the Family Liaison Officer should deliver this.

4.21 Presentation of Fire Department Badge - As a part of the funeral service at the funeral home or church, the Fire Chief may present the badge and name tag worn by the deceased firefighter to the next of kin.

The items should be in a framed display containing a department uniform patch. Administrative and support personnel will work with the Fire Chief to obtain the badge and name tag actually worn by the firefighter and to obtain duplicates to be placed on the burial uniform.

4.22 Closed Casket - If the family requests a closed casket, the family may wish to place a picture of the firefighter in uniform along with the firefighter's dress hat on top of or next to the casket.

4.23 Walkthrough - A walkthrough of firefighters at the funeral home may occur to pay tribute to the deceased firefighter. If so, the Funeral Officer will schedule the walkthrough and have firefighters form line by department. The formation will pass single file by the casket with each firefighter stopping briefly to pay tribute.

4.24 Post-services Reception - A reception may be held following the funeral. A church hall, school cafeteria, fire station, or other facility may serve for this purpose. The Survivor Action Officer will coordinate the event and ask department members, the firefighters association, or local service organizations to assist in donating and/or preparing food.

4.25 Memorial Fund - Fire department members and local organizations may want to start a memorial fund for the deceased firefighter's family. The Survivor Action Officer should work with local financial organizations in establishing this fund. The family should be involved in deciding how this will occur. The officer will emphasize to the family the importance of working with a local bank to avoid legal complications.

4.26 Flags at Half-staff - Upon notification that a fire department member has died, the Fire Chief will direct that all station flags be lowered to half-staff. They will remain at half-staff until 1700 hours the day of the final committal. When the American flag is at half-staff, no other flags will fly on the same pole. For line-of-duty deaths, the Fire Chief will request that the local officials ask other facilities to fly their flags at half-staff.

4.27 Badge Shrouding - The shroud should appear on badges at the time of notification of the death and should remain on the badge until after the funeral and final committal. For line-of-duty deaths, the badge shrouds will remain in place for a 30-day mourning period. To shroud of a badge, place a 1/2" to 3/4" piece of black material horizontally around the badge at its midpoint. If the chaplain's badge contains a cross, a crescent, tablets, or the Star

of David, the chaplain's badge remains uncovered.

4.28 Flag Presentation - When the casket is draped with a flag, an appropriate flag presentation ceremony should take place immediately before the conclusion of the committal service.

## ***CHAPTER 5: KEY ASSIGNMENTS FOR FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNERALS***

5.1 When a firefighter dies, the department must focus on the family's needs and wishes and give them the highest priority. The support offered by the department will vary depending on the type of death, as described previously in Section 4.

To support the family, a department must be prepared to manage a series of interrelated responsibilities. These duties extend from initial notification of next of kin through continuing support after the final committal service.

A department should have a funeral plan that will enable it to staff the needed assignments should a death occur. The department should identify and train personnel to handle these assignments. Depending on the size of the department, it may need to combine many of the following major assignments.

### **5.2 Survivor Action Officer**

The Fire Chief may assume the position of Survivor Action Officer but will probably assign another senior officer this function. As a direct representative of the Fire Chief, the Survivor Action Officer should receive the full cooperation of the entire fire department.

The officer is responsible for managing several important activities, the principal concern being the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. The officer will give whatever assistance is necessary to assist the family.

The Survivor Action Officer may appoint the following positions as needed and delegate responsibilities as required to successfully complete all assigned duties. The detailed Responsibility Sheets for all officers are in the section following the appendices.

### **5.3 Notification Officer**

The Federation of Fire Chaplains provides comprehensive information on how to make notifications as part of its Chaplaincy training

resources.

#### 5.4 Family Liaison Officer

The Family Liaison Officer provides the Survivor Action Officer with regular updates on the family's status and needs. Because of the critical nature of the liaison's role and the around-the-clock coverage required, a department should appoint a back-up liaison to provide relief as needed.

**All officers must work closely with the Family Liaison Officer to ensure that the family understands their options and that their wishes are honored.**

#### 5.5 Funeral Officer

The Funeral Officer's role is to serve as intermediary between the funeral director and the other fire department personnel involved in funeral or memorial service activities.

**This officer is not a funeral director and should not interfere in funeral management.**

#### 5.6 Procession Officer

The Procession Officer arranges and directs the funeral procession from the funeral home to the church, if there is a church service, and to the final committal site.

#### 5.7 Service Officer

If the family has decided to have a religious service, the Service Officer coordinates with clergy selected by the family.

#### 5.8 Final Committal Service Officer

The Final Committal Service Officer provides coordinates all the individuals responsible for the final committal service.

## ***CHAPTER 6: OTHER CONSIDERATIONS***

6.1 Inclement weather may impact upon funeral services. If severe weather conditions are anticipated, personnel involved in coordinating the funeral services should work with the Survivor Action Officer and Family Liaison Officer to implement alternative plans.

6.2 If services will occur outside the local area, the department should coordinate all planning steps with officials and agencies in that location. If possible, representatives from fire and police departments in all the communities involved should participate in the planning.

6.3 For a line-of-duty death, a large contingent of out-of-town fire service personnel will want to attend the funeral. If there will be a procession from the funeral home to the church, ask these firefighters to report directly to the church for staging prior to the start of the procession from the funeral home.

6.4 All firefighters and apparatus may take part in the procession from the funeral or memorial site to the place of final committal. If there will be a procession of firefighters marching to the church, only members from the fallen firefighter's department should participate.

## *CHAPTER 7: CEREMONIES*

7.1 If the family requests, the following personnel may take part in the ceremonial portion of the funeral:

- a. A Chief
- b. Six or eight pallbearers
- c. A Color Guard of four firefighters and one officer
- d. A bugler and piper, pipe band, or drummer

7.2 Due to the important role of pallbearers and Color Guard, a practice session should occur the day before the funeral. If not possible, these personnel must report to the funeral home several hours before the service for a protocol briefing and practice. The funeral director will instruct the pallbearers on how to handle the casket.

7.3 If the procession will include firefighters marching from one point to another, the Procession Officer must coordinate with the Funeral Officer, Service Officer, or Final Committal Officer to establish an assembly point, order of alignment, and route for the march. If marching will occur, a drummer should be part of the parade contingent to provide a steady cadence. Cadence should **not** be called verbally. Determine an appropriate assembly point for department personnel participating in the march.

Visiting fire personnel will assemble at the end point of the march.

- a. Basic alignment for the elements of a march is:
  1. Color Guard
  2. Pipe band/drummer

3. Host fire department members
4. Apparatus caisson or hearse
  - (a) The Officer-in-Charge (OIC) will walk immediately in front of the caisson or hearse.
  - (b) Three pallbearers will march on either side of the caisson or hearse.
  - (c) Two pallbearers will ride on the tailboard of the caisson or walk immediately behind the hearse. If there are only six pallbearers, two Honor Guard members will assume this position.

*Note: Check to see if this practice is allowed in your jurisdiction.*

5. Family's cars
6. Friends' cars

*Note: If the immediate family of the deceased firefighter desires to join in the march, they will fall in immediately behind the caisson or hearse and will receive an Honor Guard escort.*

- b. If the casket will be driven from the funeral home to the church, the following should occur:
  1. Determine an assembly point several blocks from the church for department personnel and the pipe band/drummer.
  2. Assign an assembly point for visiting fire department members at the church on the church side of the street.
  3. Immediately after loading the casket at the funeral home, transport the Color Guard to the fire department meeting location.
  4. Have the pallbearers board the apparatus, with two of them remaining on the rear step.

*Note: Check to see if this practice is allowed in your jurisdiction.*
  5. With a police escort, have the apparatus proceed slowly to the meeting point with the fire department contingent.
  6. Line up the procession in the same order as listed above.
  7. Direct the pallbearers to dismount and march as follows:
    - (a) The OIC in front of the apparatus
    - (b) Two or three pallbearers on each side of the apparatus
    - (c) Two pallbearers on the rear step

*Note: Check to see if this practice is allowed in your jurisdiction.*

- c. When the procession arrives, the following should occur:
  1. As the procession nears the location of the service, move the Color Guard to the side and allow the pipe band/drummer and fire department members to pass.
  2. Near the entrance to the service area, assemble the pipe band.
  3. Line up the national, state and local dignitaries near the entrance, leaving room for the Color Guard.
  4. When marching fire department members arrive at the location of the service, move them to the other side of the street. When they are in place, give the command "**Right face.**"
  5. When personnel line the street on both sides and face the center, begin the Color Guard march toward the service site followed by the apparatus or hearse. Leave a space between the Color Guard and hearse. The service assembly OIC commands "**Present arms**" (hand salute).
  6. As the Color Guard arrives, assemble it near the front of the church.
  7. Move the apparatus to the front of the service site and shut off the engine.
  8. Have the service assembly OIC command "**Order arms.**"
  9. Assemble pallbearers at the rear of the apparatus, with two in the hose bed, and prepare to remove the casket.
  10. Have the Honor Guard OIC command "**Present arms.**"
  11. Have the pipe band play as the pallbearers carry the casket to the entrance. If the chaplain or cleric performs a blessing at the rear of the apparatus, the pipe band should delay playing until the pallbearers begin to move.
  12. Have the pallbearers escort the casket to the front of the service area.
  13. Have the assembled fire department personnel file into the area and take positions in the designated seating areas.

7.4 At the close of the service, the following should take place:

- a. Fire personnel file out and assemble in specified areas in the following order:
  1. Visiting fire service personnel
  2. Department personnel
  3. National, state and local dignitaries

4. Color Guard

- b. At the funeral director's signal, the pallbearers move to the front of the location of the service and escort the coffin to the rear.
- c. The service assembly OIC commands "**Detail, attention.**"
- d. When the casket arrives at the rear, the OIC commands "**Present arms.**"
- e. If used, the piper/pipe band plays.
- f. The pallbearers move slowly to the rear of the hearse or apparatus to load the casket.
- g. After loading, the pallbearers face each other and the OIC commands "**Detail, present arms.**" The pallbearers give a hand salute.
- h. The OIC commands "**Order arms**" for all personnel.
- i. The Color Guard officer commands "**Color Guard, dismissed.**"
- j. The OIC commands "**Detail, dismissed**" to the pallbearers.
- k. The Color Guard, bugler/piper, and OIC enter the waiting fire department vehicles for transportation to the place of final committal. The pallbearers will ride on the caisson or other apparatus directly behind the caisson.
- l. Fire personnel and national, state and local dignitaries prepare to leave for the place of final committal.
- m. The Procession Officer and assistants direct vehicles taking part in the procession to the place of final committal.

7.5 Upon arrival at the place of final committal, the following will take place:

- a. The fire department personnel and Color Guard take up positions in formations as determined by the Final Committal Officer.
- b. If space permits, the Color Guard assembles near the place of final committal.
- c. The bugler is 75 feet away from the grave and will await the command from the OIC.
- d. When the caisson or hearse is in position, the pallbearers take up positions at the rear and remove the casket.
- e. The pallbearers carry the casket and place it on the grave stand. The family and other guests follow.
- f. As the pallbearers begin to move the casket, the OIC commands "**Detail, attention**" and all fire department personnel come to attention. When the pallbearers place the casket on the gravestand, the OIC commands "**Parade rest.**"
- g. If the family wants the casket draped, two pallbearers will drape it with an American flag. If the casket is not draped, an already folded flag will be placed on the casket for

presentation.

- h. The chaplain and/or cleric will conduct the committal service and lead in the final prayer. Note: If not part of the funeral or religious service, the "Last Alarm" ceremony may occur at this point. The OIC orders "**Present arms**" prior to the ringing of the bell. The hand salute should occur during the playing of Taps.
- i. The OIC next commands "**Detail, attention**" and "**Present arms.**" A hand salute follows; the Color Guard presents arms and dips the departmental flag. The hand salute occurs during the playing of Taps.
- j. The bugler plays Taps.
- k. The OIC commands "**Order arms.**"
- l. At the conclusion of Taps, the Honor Guard removes the American flag from the casket and folds it. The Honor Guard Officer presents the folded flag to the fire chief who, in turn, presents it to the family.
- m. The funeral director gives words of thanks on behalf of the family and indicates the conclusion of the services.
- n. The OIC commands "**Detail, dismissed.**"

***FUNERAL APPENDICES***

**APPENDIX 1**

**EMPLOYEE EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION**

The information that you provide will be used **ONLY** in the event of your serious injury or death in the line of duty. Please take the time to fill it out fully and accurately because the data will help the department take care of your family and friends.

**Personal Information**

Last Name	First Name	Middle Name
Home Address		
City	State	Zip
Home Phone		
(    )		

**Contact Information**

Family and friends you would like the department to contact. Please list in the order in which you want them contacted. If needed provide additional names on the back of this sheet.

Name
Relationship
Home Contact Information
Address
Phone
Work Contact Information
Employer
Address
Phone
Cell/Pager Phone
Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for interpreter

<b>Name</b>
<b>Relationship</b>
<b>Home Contact Information</b>
Address
Phone
<b>Work Contact Information</b>
Employer
Address
Phone
Cell/Pager Phone
<b>Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for interpreter</b>

<b>Name</b>
<b>Relationship</b>
<b>Home Contact Information</b>
Address
Phone
<b>Work Contact Information</b>
Employer
Address
Phone
Cell/Pager Phone
<b>Special Circumstances – such as health conditions or need for interpreter</b>

<b>List names and dates of birth for all of your children</b>	
Name	DOB
Name	DOB
Name	DOB

<b>List department members you would like to accompany a chief fire officer to make the notification</b>
Name
Name

<b>List anyone else you want to help make the notification (minister or chaplain for example)</b>
Name
Relationship
Home Address Phone
Employer Address Phone Cell or Pager Phone

### Optional Information

Make sure someone close to you knows this information

Religious Preferences Religion/Church Contact Person Address/Phone
Funeral Preferences
Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services? YES NO
If you are entitled to a military funeral, do you wish to have one? YES NO
Do you wish to have a fire service funeral? YES NO
Please list your memberships in fire service, religious, or community organizations that may provide assistance to your family.

Do you have a will?	YES	NO
If yes, where is it and who should be contacted about it?		
Name		
Address		
Phone		
List all life insurance policies you have		
<u>Company</u>	<u>Policy #</u>	<u>Location of policy</u>

<b>Special Requests</b>
If you are an organ donor, coordination with medical officials will be necessary. Please list any special requests here.

**Form last updated on \_\_\_\_\_**

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **SUGGESTIONS ON PREPARING A FIRE SERVICE EULOGY**

For years, members of the fire service have told the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation that preparing a eulogy was one of the most difficult things they had ever done. They wanted their remarks to be both comforting and respectful.

A eulogy is for the living, most importantly for family and close friends. So we have turned to survivors and friends of fallen firefighters to share what meant the most to them. We also have asked senior fire officers what worked best in their preparation and delivery. If you asked to deliver a eulogy for a fallen firefighter from your department, here are a few guidelines that may help you gather your thoughts and prepare a fitting tribute.

#### **Research**

- Get the key facts—age, nickname, names of family members and closest friends, timeline of key events in the person’s life, personal and professional accomplishments, honors and awards received
- Ask friends and family members for stories that illustrate how they want to remember their loved one. If you use one of these stories, remember to acknowledge the source. For example, “Jim’s daughters told me...” or “Ann’s father reminded me that ...”
- Include information about the firefighter’s character and personality. What was the firefighter proudest of in his or her life? For what would he or she want to be remembered?
- If you knew the firefighter, include personal anecdotes and memories.
- If you did not know the firefighter personally, say that! Speak with people who did, especially those who shared years of friendship and memories.

#### **Organize**

- You may want to use a theme to tie your presentation together. For example, “Jack loved adventure,” or, “In everything he did, Don reached out to help other people.”
- It may help to put your ideas on note cards and then arrange them in a logical order for your presentation

#### **Draft**

- Begin by expressing your condolences and the department’s sense of loss.
- Acknowledge family members, including spouse or significant other, children, parents, siblings, and close friends.
- Focus on the person’s life, not the circumstances that lead to the death.
- Include funny stories. Even in the midst of deep grief, it is important to smile. And remember to mention the source of the story, if appropriate.

- Include a statement of support from the department. Acknowledge the department member who is acting as the liaison for the family. The department must follow through on any promised support, so only promise what you can ensure will be delivered.
- Have a printed copy of the final eulogy ready for the family and others who may want a copy.

### **Practice**

- Review your remarks carefully before the service. If you are nervous about speaking in front of other people, practice speaking in front of someone you trust to give you honest, supportive feedback.
- It is okay to show emotion!
- Have a back-up plan so someone else can take over if you cannot finish speaking.
- Be prepared to adjust your planned remarks. Before you speak, another person may use some of the same stories or information. Acknowledge this or have other stories ready.
- Above all, remember not everyone is a great orator. However, families will remember the sincerity of your words and your kindness forever.

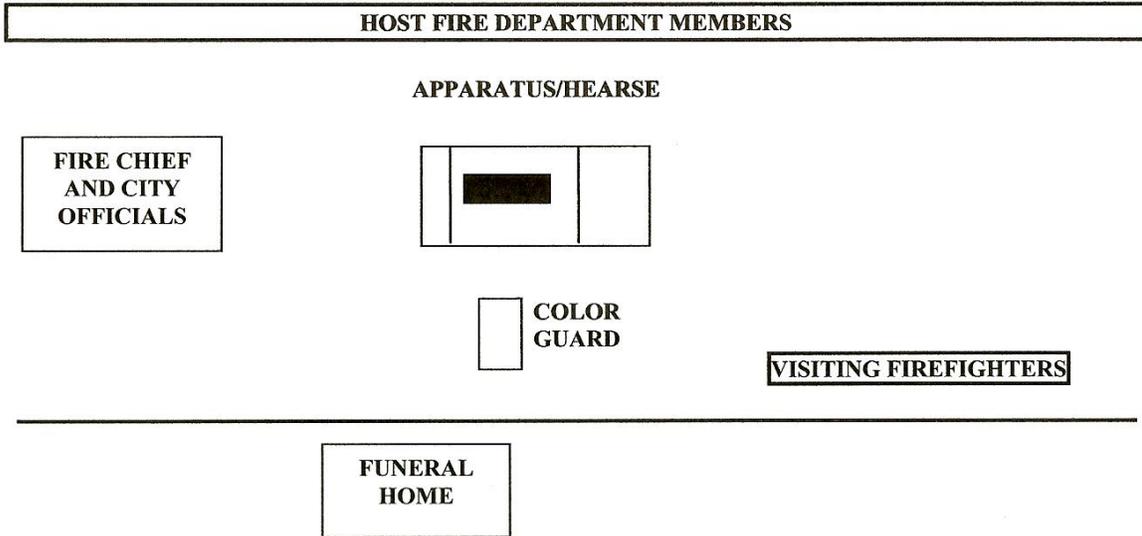
### **Reference Materials**

These resources may also help you in writing and delivering a eulogy.

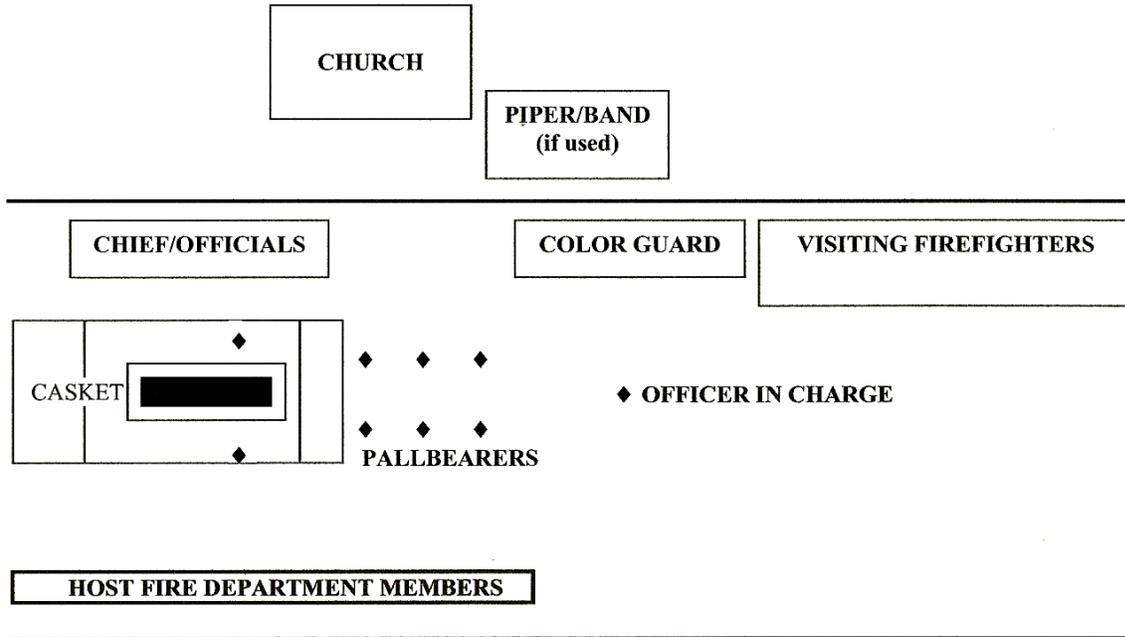
*Funerals with Love* [link to: [www.funeralswithlove.com/eulogy.htm](http://www.funeralswithlove.com/eulogy.htm)] Suggestions for structuring, writing, and delivering a eulogy; a downloadable book is available for a fee

*Grief Loss & Recovery* [link to: [www.grieflossrecovery.com/grief-articles/martin01.html](http://www.grieflossrecovery.com/grief-articles/martin01.html)] Brief step-by-step guideline to writing a eulogy

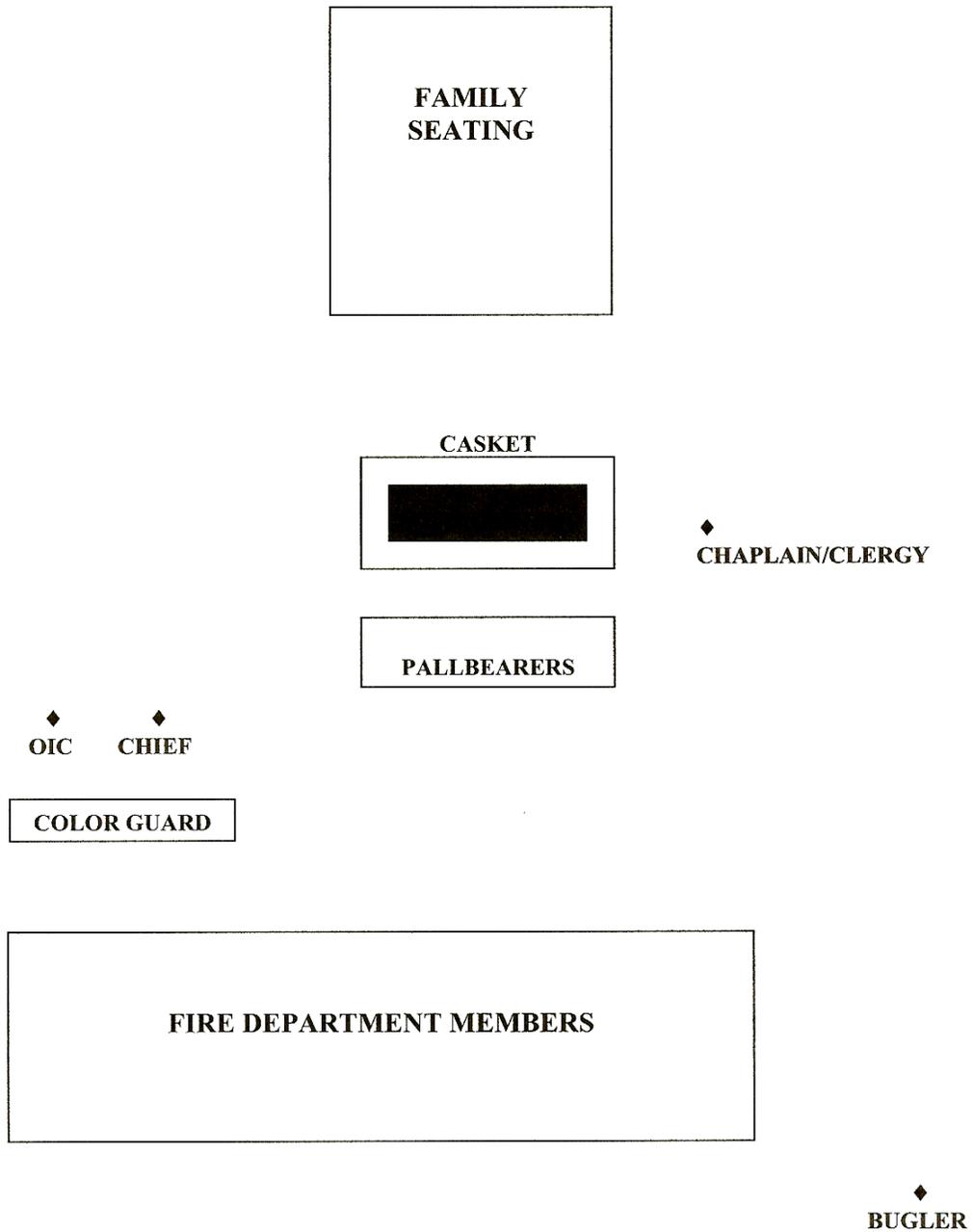
### APPENDIX 3 SUGGESTED FUNERAL HOME FORMATIONS



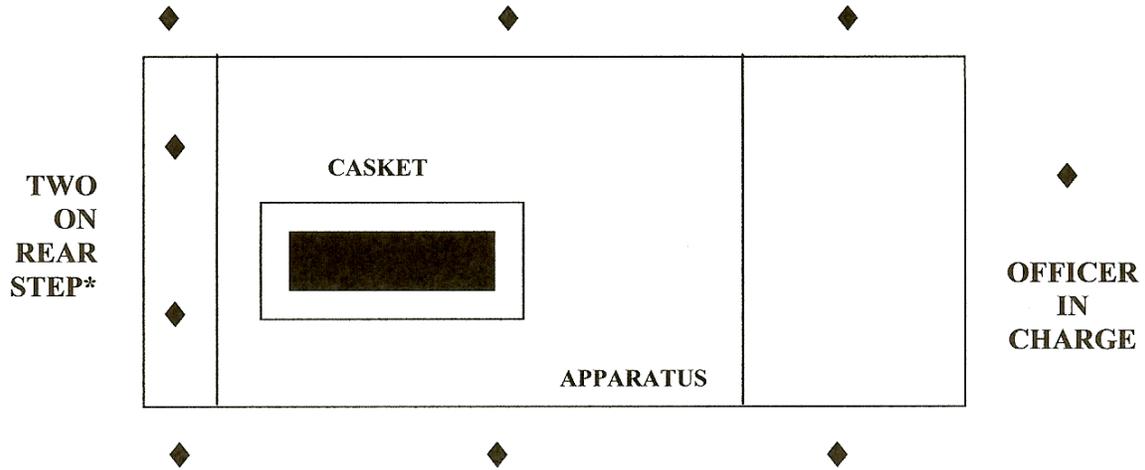
## APPENDIX 4 SUGGESTED CHURCH FORMATIONS



## APPENDIX 5 SUGGESTED FINAL COMMITTAL SERVICE FORMATIONS



## APPENDIX 6 PALLBEARERS' LOCATION WHEN MARCHING



*\*Note: Check to see if this practice is allowed in your jurisdiction.*

## **APPENDIX 7 MILITARY STANDARDS**

### **POSITION OF ATTENTION**

Assume the position of “Attention” on the command of “**Attention.**” To assume this position, bring the heels together smartly so that the heels are on the same line with the toes pointing out equally, forming an angle of 45 degrees.

Keep the legs straight without locking the knees. Hold the body erect with the hips level, chest lifted and arched, and the shoulders square and even.

Let the arms hang straight, without stiffness, along the sides with the back of the hands outward. Curl the fingers so that the tips of the thumb are alongside and touching the first joint of the forefingers. Keep the thumbs straight and along the seams of the trousers with all fingertips touching the trouser leg.

Keep the head erect and hold it squarely to the front with the chin drawn slightly in so that the axis of the head and neck is vertical. Look straight to the front. Rest the weight of the body equally on the heels and balls of the feet. Remain silent except when replying to a question or when directed otherwise.

### **POSITION OF PARADE REST**

Parade rest is commanded from the position of “Attention” only. The command for this movement is “**Parade, Rest.**”

On the command of execution “**Rest,**” move the left foot ten inches to the left of the right foot.

Keep the legs straight, resting the weight of the body equally on the heels and balls of both feet.

Simultaneously place the hands at the small of the back, centered on the belt line. Keep the fingers of both hands extended and joined, interlocking the thumbs so that the palm of the right hand is outward.

Hold the head and eyes as at the position of “**Attention.**” Remain silent and do not move. “**Stand at, Ease,**” “**At Ease,**” or “**Rest**” may be commanded from this position.

### **STAND AT EASE**

The command for this movement is “**Stand At, Ease.**”

On the command of execution “**Ease,**” execute “**Parade, Rest**” but turn the head and eyes directly toward the officer in charge. “**At Ease**” or “**Rest**” may be commanded from this position.

### **AT EASE**

The command for this movement is **“At Ease.”** On the command **“At Ease,”** movement is allowed but personnel must remain standing and silent with the right foot in place. **“Rest”** may be commanded from this position.

### **REST**

The command for this movement is **“Rest.”** On the command **“Rest,”** **NO** talking, smoking, or drinking are allowed unless otherwise specified. Personnel must remain standing with the right foot in place. **“At Ease”** may be commanded from this position.

### **HAND SALUTE**

The hand salute is a one-count movement. The command is **“Present, Arms.”**

On the command of execution (**“Arms”**), raise the right hand to the head dress.

With the tip of the forefinger touch the rim of the visor slightly to the right of the right eye. The fingers and thumb are extended and joined, palm down. The outer edge of the hand is barely canted downward so that neither the palm nor the back of the hand is visible from the front.

The upper arm is horizontal with the elbow inclined slightly forward and the hand and wrist straight. Order arms from this salute in a one-count movement.

The command is **“Order, Arms.”** On the command of execution **“Arms,”** return the hand smartly to the side, resuming the position of attention.

When uncovered or when wearing a head dress without a visor, the hand salute is executed in the same manner as previously described, except the tip of the forefinger touches the forehead near the eyebrow and slightly to the right of the right eye.

## APPENDIX 8 TRADITIONAL METHOD FOR FOLDING THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES

Hold the flag flat with one person holding each end of the flag.

- (A) Fold the flag lengthwise once.

Fold the lower striped section of the flag over the blue field.



A)

- (B) Fold the folded edge over to meet the open edge.



B)

- (C) Start a triangular fold by bringing the striped corner of the folded edge to the open edge.



C)

- (D) Fold the outer point inward parallel with the open edge to form a second triangle.

Continue folding until the entire length of the flag is folded into a triangle with only the blue field and margin showing.



D)

Tuck the remaining margin into the pocket formed by the folds at the blue field edge of the flag.



E)

- (E) When properly folded, the flag should resemble a three cornered (cocked) hat.



## **APPENDIX 9 SUGGESTED “LAST ALARM” CEREMONY**

The chaplain or a department member reads the following:

Throughout most of history, the lives of firefighters have been closely associated with the ringing of a bell. As they began their hours of duty, it was the bell that started it off. Through the day and night, each alarm was sounded by a bell, which called them to fight fire and to place their lives in jeopardy for the good of their fellow man. And when the fire was out, and the alarm had come to an end, the bell rang three times to signal the end.

And now our Brother (Sister) \_\_\_\_\_ has completed his (her) task, his (her) duties well done, and the bell rings three times in memory of, and, in tribute to, his (her) life and service.

The Officer-in-Charge calls everyone to Attention.

The Color Guard is called to Present Arms.

The bell is struck three times.

The Color Guard is called to Order Arms.

The firefighters are seated (if in church or funeral home).

The chaplain offers a closing prayer.

## **APPENDIX 10 SAMPLE ORDER OF EVENTS**

Funeral Service for Firefighter John Doe  
Sample Fire Department  
October 1, 2003

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1:00 p.m.      | Arrival of hearse at church<br>Honor Guard Posted<br>Color Guard Posted   |
| 1:30-2:00 p.m. | Arrival of guests, fire personnel, and fire apparatus<br>Fire personnel placed in formations<br>Explanation of commands to be given<br>Attention<br>Present Arms<br>Order Arms  |
| 2:00-2:15 p.m. | Arrival of family and processional<br>Pallbearers remove the casket<br>Procession enters the church<br>Minister<br>Color Guard<br>Pallbearers and casket<br>Honorary pallbearers<br>Family and friends<br>Department members<br>Members of other fire departments |
| 2:15-3:00p.m.  | Funeral service (options)<br>Music<br>Remembrances<br>Readings<br>Eulogy<br>Sermon<br>Presentation of badge<br>Walk-by of fire personnel<br>Benediction   |
| 3:00-3:15 p.m. | Funeral recession<br>Minister<br>Color Guard<br>Pallbearers and casket<br>Honorary pallbearers  |

- Family and friends
  - Department members
  - Members of other fire departments
- 3:15-4:00 p.m.      Procession to place of final committal (Order of vehicles)
- Lead escort
  - Host department engine
  - Hearse (It may be the same if an apparatus serves as caisson)
  - Family limousines
  - Pallbearers' vehicle
  - Honorary pallbearers' vehicle
  - Honor Guard vehicle
  - Host department Chief's vehicle
  - Other host department vehicles
  - Police vehicles
  - Local officials' vehicles
  - Vehicles from other fire departments
  - Vehicles from other emergency service departments
  - Vehicles of friends or other private Vehicles
  - Rear escort
- 4:00-4:15 p.m.      Graveside processional\*
- Color Guard
  - Members of host department
  - Members of other fire departments
  - Honorary pallbearers
  - Minister
  - Pallbearers and casket
  - Family
  - Friends
- 4:15-4:45 p.m.      Graveside service options\*
- Opening prayer
  - Words to the family
  - Final prayer
  - Last Alarm ceremony
  - Taps
  - Presentation of the flag
  - Benediction
  - Dismissal

4:45 p.m. Graveside recessional\*  
Color Guard  
Members of host department  
Members of other fire departments  
Honorary pallbearers  
Minister  
Pallbearers and casket  
Family  
Friends

\*The family may choose to have the body or ashes placed in a crypt. In this case, the same protocols apply. However, the Final Committal Service Officer should modify them appropriately to fit the specific circumstances.

## **APPENDIX 11 HANDLING DIGNITARIES AT FIRE DEPARTMENT FUNERALS**

When a firefighter dies in the line of duty, many elected officials and fire service leaders show their respect by attending the funeral or memorial service. While the family of the fallen hero should always command the most attention, departments should also be prepared to handle dignitaries who plan to attend.

Most departments understand that their local elected officials will attend the ceremony honoring a local firefighter. Senior elected officials may even have a role in the fire department funeral.

Since the World Trade Center disaster, more state, national, and international officials have attended fire service funerals, especially those that involved multiple fatalities or received special attention.

Departments should be prepared to handle attendance by the following dignitaries:

### **Federal Officials**

- President or Vice President
- Cabinet Members, including Secretary of Homeland Security
- Members of Congress
- FEMA Director
- United States Fire Administrator
- Other Federal agency officials, including U.S. Forest Service and Department of Interior officials, may attend a wildland firefighter's ceremony

### **State and Local Government Officials**

- Governor or Lieutenant Governor
- State Legislators
- State Fire Marshal or Agency Officer with Fire Program Oversight
- Local Elected Officials, including city and county

### **National and State Fire Service Officials**

- IAFC President, Officers, or Division/District Representatives
- IAFF General President, Officers, or Division/District Representatives
- National Volunteer Fire Council President or Officers
- State Fire Chief Organization Officers
- State IAFF Officers
- State Volunteer Fire Council Officers
- National Fallen Firefighters Foundation Representative

A department should include a section or branch to handle dignitaries in its official line-of-duty death funeral plan. Many departments establish an Incident Management System to run the funeral or memorial service.

Here are some actions to consider:

- Immediately assign a dignitary coordinator, and publicize this person's contact information. If necessary, assign others to assist.
- Prepare a fact sheet with pertinent information on the department, the fallen firefighter, and the ceremony.
- As soon as possible, make contact with the dignitaries' coordinators. Senior level government officials may have both a security detail and a staff point of contact. Be prepared to handle different requests for the same senior official's appearance.
- Establish a plan for meeting and transporting dignitaries to the service.
- Set up a seating plan, and designate a holding area for dignitaries.
- Determine in advance if any of the dignitaries will be introduced or acknowledged during the service. If so, by whom?
- Determine if dignitaries will speak during the service. This decision must be made in consultation with the family. Decide on the length of the remarks and in which part of the service.
- Decide the order in which dignitaries will ride in the procession and stand at the graveside service. Remember that the family members should always be in the first cars before any dignitaries.
- Determine if dignitaries will have direct contact with the survivors. This is best done in a private setting with no media coverage. Make sure the family wants this to happen.
- Provide information to dignitaries before their arrival. If possible, provide dignitaries with a background sheet and a summary of events, even if they are not speaking at the service.
- Be aware that agendas, schedules and even the people coming may change several times up to the actual event. Stay flexible!

## **SAMPLE BACKGROUND SHEET**

### **Funeral/Memorial Service Information**

Date:  
Time:  
Location:  
Type of service: (funeral or memorial service):  
Estimated length of service:  
Dignitary Coordinator:  
Coordinator's contact information:  
(phone/cell phone/pager/email)

### **Fallen Firefighter/Department Information**

Name of Fallen Firefighter:  
Age:  
Name of Department:  
Status: (career/volunteer/contract)  
Length of service:  
Date of Death:  
Brief Description of the Incident:  
Name, relationship and age of each immediate survivor:  
Name of Chief:  
Contact information:  
Special circumstances, if any:

Note: the Dignitary Coordinator should complete a sheet for each dignitary who will attend the service.

### **Dignitary Information Form**

Name:  
Title:  
Name of dignitary's chief of staff or designated point of contact:  
Contact information:  
Names and titles of people who will accompany dignitary:  
Estimated Time of Arrival in area:  
• mode of transportation?  
Estimated Time of Departure:  
• mode of transportation?  
Will dignitary require local transportation to/from ceremony?  
Are there security considerations?  
If so, contact information for security detail coordinator:  
Special requests:  
Connections to fire service or member of the fire service:

## **SURVIVOR ACTION OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. As a direct representative of the Fire Chief, the Survivor Action Officer should receive the full cooperation of the entire fire department. The Survivor Action Officer will appoint assistants and delegate responsibilities as required to successfully complete all assigned duties.
2. The Survivor Action Officer is responsible for the management of several important activities. The principal concern is the ongoing welfare of the next of kin. The officer shall render all necessary assistance to help the family through the crisis.
3. The Survivor Action Officer coordinates and supervises the activities of a number of key personnel assigned to handle the specific aspects of the funeral arrangements and to assist the surviving family. These key personnel include:
  - a. Family Liaison Officer - Remains on call to the surviving family 24 hours a day to assist and support as needed. Provides the Survivor Action Officer with regular updates on the family's status and needs. This officer probably needs a backup to provide on-going assistance over a multi-day period.
  - b. Funeral Officer - Provides coordination and interaction with the Funeral Director and other personnel on funeral arrangements.
  - c. Service Officer - Provides coordination and interaction with the church to arrange the funeral service.
  - d. Final Committal Officer - Provides coordination with others involved in the funeral arrangements in order to arrange all details at the final committal site.
  - e. Procession Officer - Arranges and directs the funeral procession.
4. Additional duties for the Survivor Action Officer include:
  - a. Assuring that next-of-kin notification has been properly accomplished.
  - b. Officially notifying all fire department stations of the death and passing on the order to have flags lowered to half-staff and making arrangements to notify off duty and vacationing personnel.
  - c. Notifying the following personnel and agencies, as appropriate, of the death:
    - i. Union president and/or Firefighters Association representative (national, state and local)
    - ii. Officials from other local government offices
    - iii. Other fire and police departments
  - d. Making appropriate follow-up contacts when the funeral arrangements and schedules have been determined.
  - e. Working with the Family Liaison Officer to determine the

- desired method of collecting the deceased firefighter's personal items from the fire station.
- f. Conducting a coordination meeting with the key personnel as soon as possible so that everyone understands the family's wishes regarding options chosen for the funeral ceremony. Once the funeral procedures are established, instructing all key personnel to make the appropriate contacts and setting a date and time for a final coordination meeting.
  - g. Conducting a final coordination meeting with key personnel to:
    - i. Establish schedule and timetables.
    - ii. Identify times and places for group gatherings as required by the ceremonies.
    - iii. Contact all appropriate individuals and agencies with the schedule, meeting places, and special instructions.
  - h. Serving as a key contact person for outside agencies, news media, and other fire departments in relation to the death and subsequent ceremonies. This duty may be handled by a department Public Information Officer.
  - i. After obtaining family approval through the Family Liaison Officer, making appropriate arrangements for a post-funeral reception and a facility to handle a large group of people.
  - j. Arranging for a fire department member to be on hand at the residence to assist the family and provide for security during the funeral and funeral-related activities. Additional meals for immediate family members will be provided as needed.
  - k. In career departments, coordinating with the appropriate local government office to arrange for a final paycheck and for the completion of any required paperwork.
  - l. Contacting neighboring fire departments and arranging for mutual aid stand-in fire companies during the funeral.
  - m. Ensuring accessibility to the family for the duration of the funeral process.
  - n. Coordinating meals for the family and assuring ongoing family contact by the Family Liaison Officer.
  - o. Assuring that all department functions continue as required.

## FAMILY LIAISON OFFICER

In every incident involving the death of a firefighter, or when the death of an injured firefighter appears imminent, the Fire Chief will assign a Family Liaison Officer. This individual will perform the following duties:

1. Be readily available with a fire department vehicle, pager, and portable radio for the entire funeral process.
2. Immediately report to the deceased's residence or that of the next of kin, or to the medical facility or morgue, and provide reassurance and support to the family. Ensure that the **NEEDS OF THE FAMILY** come before the wishes of the department or any other officials.
3. Be prepared to discuss all aspects of the funeral process and relay to the Fire Chief the family's wishes on the level of the department's involvement in the funeral process. These considerations include:
  - a. What the department can offer in the way of assistance based on the type of death
  - b. Churches with seating capacities large enough to accommodate projected attendance at the funeral. First, any alternate churches will need to agree that the family minister or fire department chaplain may officiate at the service.
  - c. Fire department funeral ceremonial options (i.e., gun salute, presenting of the flag, playing of Taps, Last Alarm, the ladder archway, etc.)
  - d. Proper recognition for the family and friends during the funeral and funeral procession
4. Ask the family to select six or eight primary pallbearers and the optional honorary pallbearers. Make suggestions only if the family asks for some.
5. Assist the family in determining:
  - a. The type of final committal
  - b. The funeral home to use
  - c. The clergy to use
  - d. The place of final committal
  - e. Whether to bury the deceased in a fire department uniform and, if so, how to obtain one
  - f. Alternate clothes for burial and delivering them to the funeral director
  - g. A photograph of the deceased and delivering it to the funeral director
  - h. Length of the wake and a tentative schedule
  - i. The length of the funeral service to include:
    - (1) Readings and readers
    - (2) Music and musicians
    - (3) Deliverer of the funeral tribute and/or eulogy
    - (4) Inclusion of a "Last Alarm" bell service
  - j. Ceremonies at the place of final committal:

- (1) Band or Piper
- (2) Singing
- (3) Honor Guard/Firing Party
- (4) Readings
- (5) Last Alarm Service
- (6) Taps
- (7) Use of an engine, a caisson or a hearse
- (8) Use of an engine or ladder truck to carry flowers
- (9) Personnel walking alongside the caisson or riding in the procession
- k. Any other special considerations
6. Be available to the family on a 24-hour basis to assist in any way necessary.
7. Address the following items with the family:
  - a. Autopsy report
  - b. Obtaining birth certificates, marriage certificates, death certificates, or VA or military records
  - c. Determine the benefits for which the survivors may be eligible, including:
    - (1) Fire department benefits due to surviving beneficiaries
    - (2) VA spouse and children's benefits and burial benefits
    - (3) Social Security benefits
    - (4) Federal Public Safety Officers' Benefits for spouse and other survivors
    - (5) State benefits for survivors of fallen firefighters
    - (6) Educational assistance and scholarship programs for spouses and children
    - (7) Life and health insurance plans (personal and city) including funeral benefits
    - (8) Final paycheck, including sick leave, vacation payoff, and W-2 forms
    - (9) Deferred compensation account
  - d. Offer to identify lawyers, accountants and/or financial advisors to assist with legal and financial issues. Ask the family if they already have advisors to help with the following:
    - (1) Transfer ownership of property and vehicles to survivors
    - (2) Review all outstanding bills before payment by survivors for legality and accuracy. This should include last illness, previous debts, and funeral expenses. Some bills may be covered by insurance.
    - (3) Change name on all bank accounts
    - (4) Check on mortgage insurance
    - (5) Explore damages resulting from the circumstances of the death
8. Be constantly alert for ways to help the family of a fallen firefighter cope with the tragedy. Immediately relay any special needs to the Fire Chief to obtain the resources to meet those needs.

## **FUNERAL OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Coordinate with the Family Liaison Officer and the funeral director to insure that the funeral wishes of the deceased firefighter's family are carried out.
2. Attend all meetings called by the Survivor Action Officer to determine the following:
  - a. The schedule of events and the length of the funeral service
  - b. Whether fire department vehicles will serve as a caisson or flower carrier. If they are not used, make alternate arrangements with the funeral director.
3. If the firefighter's immediate family has not requested limousine service from the funeral home on the day of the funeral, ask the funeral director to provide the service and send an invoice for the service to the fire department.
4. Coordinate with Honor Guard members to establish an Honor Guard schedule at the funeral home and church.
5. Coordinate with the departments involved and with the funeral director a formal walkthrough of uniformed personnel. This includes seating arrangements.
6. Work with the fire department chaplain or clergy member designated by the family to coordinate any prayer services to be conducted at the funeral home and forward this information to the Survival Action Officer.
7. Develop a schedule for uniformed personnel to follow the day of the funeral at the funeral site. This includes:
  - a. Arrival time for uniformed personnel and specific instructions where to gather
  - b. Briefing and practice of formations that will be present when the casket is removed
  - c. Briefing on proper protocols for entering and leaving the funeral site
8. Coordinate vehicle staging with the Procession Officer, including arrangements for fire department vehicles. Ensure the availability of sufficient personnel to properly direct and stage incoming apparatus and vehicles.
9. Obtain from the Family Liaison Officer the uniform or other clothing that the deceased will wear during viewing and deliver it to the funeral director.
10. Coordinate with the Family Liaison Officer on special readings or eulogies.
11. Obtain white gloves for all fire department pallbearers.

## PROCESSION OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Procession Officer is responsible for coordinating the procession from the funeral home to the church or other service area (if necessary) and from there, or other funeral site, to the place of final committal.

Duties include:

1. Attend all coordination meetings to determine the following:
  - a. Name of the funeral home
  - b. Name of the church or other service location
  - c. Name of the place of final committal
  - d. Use of an engine as a caisson or a conventional hearse
  - e. Use of an engine as a flower carrier
  - f. Schedule of events the day of the funeral
  - g. The logistics of the procession:
    - (1) Honor Guard
    - (2) Band or Pipers
    - (3) Pallbearers
2. Establish a system for staging and coordinating vehicles at all locations where funeral activities will occur. Coordinate the vehicle staging with appropriate key personnel (service officials, officials at the site of final committal). Ensure that sufficient personnel are available at all staging locations to efficiently direct and stage apparatus and vehicles.
3. Coordinate with the Family Liaison Officer to determine any special circumstances affecting the procession. These may include:
  - a. Passing the firefighter's home, fire station, or other special location
  - b. Special static displays of equipment and personnel at locations on the procession route
  - c. The use of crossed aerial ladders at the entrance to the site of the final committal or other location. If used, contact the Survival Action Officer to obtain the necessary apparatus.
4. Contact the local law enforcement authorities for assistance in working with the funeral director to:
  - a. Establish routes for the procession.
  - b. Determine traffic control needs.
    - (1) Traffic rerouting and street closings at the funeral home and funeral site. Contact the appropriate government agency or department to obtain barricades if needed.
    - (2) Traffic control at any special assembly points.
    - (3) If necessary, posting "No Parking" signs around the funeral home, funeral site, and any other assembly points.
    - (4) Directing of staged vehicles as they line up for procession(s).
  - c. Arrange for procession escorts.
5. Develop maps showing the procession route and other needed information. Maps will be handed out at the briefing at the funeral site

prior to the beginning of the service and sent to attendees from out of town. Post them on the department's website along with times and required dress.

6. Align vehicles in the procession in coordination with the funeral director:
  - a. Lead Escort
  - b. Fire department vehicle used as flower carrier
  - c. Hearse or engine used as caisson
  - d. Family vehicles
  - e. Pallbearers (if not riding on flower vehicle and caisson)
  - f. Honorary pallbearers
  - g. Honor Guard/Color Guard
  - h. Fire Chief's vehicle
  - i. Other host fire department vehicles
  - j. Local law enforcement vehicles
  - k. Local officials' vehicles
  - l. Vehicles from other fire departments
  - m. Vehicles from other police department
  - n. Vehicles of family friends and other private vehicles
  - o. Rear Escort
7. If fire department apparatus serve as a caisson and/or flower vehicle, contact the Survivor Action Officer and determine which apparatus will be used. Ensure the following preparations have been made:
  - a. Apparatus is thoroughly cleaned and hose beds stripped.
  - b. Hose dividers are removed from the apparatus serving as a caisson.
  - c. The hose bed on the caisson engine is adapted to easily facilitate casket placement and removal. This needs to be coordinated with the funeral director.
  - d. Apparatus operators wear full dress uniforms while driving.
  - e. Deceased firefighter's bunker gear is placed in a riding position on the caisson with the bunker boots turned backwards.
  - f. If used, bunting and/or funeral flags are affixed to the apparatus.

## **FUNERAL SERVICE OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Funeral Service Officer has the primary responsibility of coordinating all of the activities and ceremonies at the church or funeral site. Duties include:

1. Attend coordination meetings and obtain the following information from the Survivor Action Officer and Family Liaison Officer:
  - a. Schedule of events
  - b. Location of the service
  - c. Clergy involved, including the fire department chaplain
  - d. Readings and readers
  - e. Type and length of service
  - f. Requested ceremonial items:
    - (1) Badge presentation
    - (2) Special readings
    - (3) Special eulogies
  - g. Music and musicians
  - h. Information on the deceased firefighter, both professional and personal. Give this information to the person delivering the tribute or eulogy.
2. Contact the Procession Officer and coordinate vehicle staging at the service location.
3. Make seating arrangements for those attending the service. In addition to family members, provide dedicated seating for:
  - a. Pallbearers
  - b. Honor Guard
  - c. Uniformed personnel
  - d. Dignitaries
4. Determine the formations to be used and coordinate them during the arrival and removal of the casket from the location of the service. Review military commands for the formations and issue them when appropriate.
5. Develop a program for the service and give it to the Family Liaison Officer to discuss with the family. Ask if they want any special prayer cards and, if so, provide a draft.
6. After approval by the family, print the program and prayer cards, if used.

## **FINAL COMMITTAL SERVICE OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES**

The Final Committal Service Officer is responsible for the preparation and coordination of events at the site of the final committal. These duties start at the time the procession vehicles arrive and people exit the vehicles. The officer is also responsible for liaison with personnel who manage and operate the final committal site. Duties include:

1. Attending coordination meetings and obtaining the following information from the Survivor Action Officer and Family Liaison Officer:
  - a. Type of final committal:
    - (1) Burial
    - (2) Placement in a crypt
    - (3) Cremation
  - b. Family requests:
    - (1) Final Alarm Service
    - (2) Taps
    - (3) Firing Party
    - (4) Readings and readers
    - (5) Music and musicians
2. Schedule and coordinate the sequence of events that will take place at the final committal site. This includes coordinating any special requests received from the Survivor Action Officer or Family Liaison Officer.
3. Develop the type of formations for the uniformed personnel and their locations. Issue appropriate orders consistent with military standards.
4. Ensure that the officials at the final committal site take care of all necessary items, such as:
  - a. Overhead protection for immediate family
  - b. Seating for the immediate family
  - c. A public address system if needed
5. Ensure that Honor Guard members are thoroughly familiar with folding and presenting the flag to the next of kin.
6. Coordinate with the Survivor Action Officer to see if any family members have medical conditions requiring emergency medical personnel and equipment at the site.
7. Upon dismissal of the formation, announce the location of the post-funeral reception, if any.

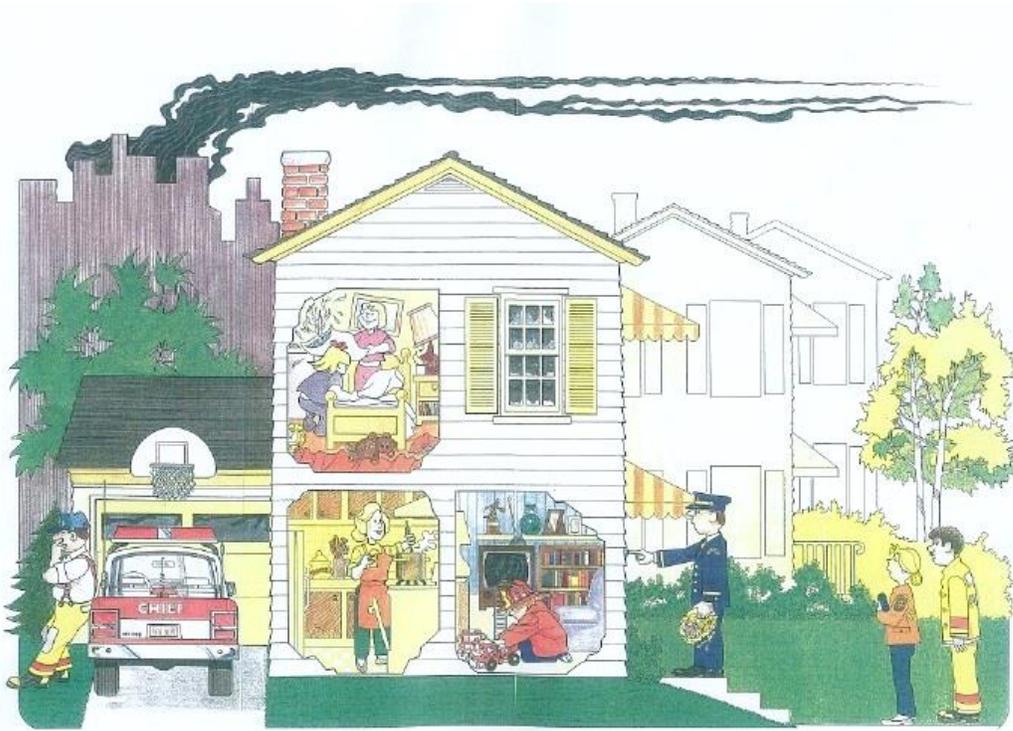


# SECTION III

## ADVANCED FIRE

### CHAPLAIN

### RESOURCES





# A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF FIRE CHAPLAINCY

## A Christian Theology of Fire Chaplain Ministry

*William Lotz, author of this chapter is a chaplain with Tri-Cities Chaplaincy and is assigned to work with Emergency Services. Chaplain Lotz works with thirteen fire and law enforcement agencies recruiting, training, and administering volunteer chaplain teams. He received his Doctor of Ministry, a chaplain-training project, from Golden Gate Theological Seminary in 1999. William and his wife Bobbie have three daughters and live in West Richland, Washington.*

*EDITOR'S NOTE: This chapter is included as submitted by the author. It is important that Chaplains have a theological foundation for their work and this is presented as an example from which you may choose to agree, disagree, add to, or take from. The Federation of Fire Chaplains does not necessarily endorse any theology as that of the Federation, but encourages each chaplain to do the work of researching his or her own.*

The development of a training model for Emergency Service Chaplaincy requires a theological foundation for the ministry of chaplaincy.<sup>28</sup> Is chaplaincy a valid ministry? Does it follow along biblical lines? Is it supported by the teaching and example of scripture? The validity of the ministry of the chaplain has been questioned by some Christians, being labeled as merely social concern. Others have embraced the chaplain's role for centuries, even giving it priority. Over the history of the church, most Christians have agreed that Christ calls the church to serve the world in his name; however there has been much debate over the relationship and priority between evangelism and social action.<sup>29</sup> The theological foundation for this project will discuss where the ministry of the chaplain can be seen in the nature of God, in the teaching and life of Jesus Christ, and in the mission and work of the church.

***Chaplain ministry  
must have a  
biblical  
foundation.***

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<sup>28</sup> William Lotz. Emergency Service Chaplaincy Training for Ministers (D.Min. Project Report, GGBTS, 1999)

<sup>29</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 650

## ***FIRE CHAPLAINCY AND THE NATURE OF GOD***

***God is described by His nature and His actions***

God can be described by the things that are His nature and by the things that are His actions. God’s nature is often described in terms of His attributes. Attributes are permanent qualities of God that are inseparable from the being or essence of God.<sup>30</sup> Erickson divides the attributes of God into His attributes of greatness, and those of His goodness or moral qualities. These moral qualities include His moral purity (holiness, righteousness, justice), His integrity (genuineness, veracity, faithfulness), and His love (benevolence, grace, mercy, persistence). Although all of these attributes are necessary to give a fuller picture of God, the current study will focus on God’s love and its components.<sup>31</sup>

***Most people will describe God as “Love”***

When asked to describe God or to give God’s most prevalent attribute, many people would answer it is His love. There is scriptural support for this proclamation. I John 4:8 tells us, “He who does not love does not know God, for God is love...” Later in the same chapter, verse 16 reads, “So we know and believe the love God has for us, God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.” The work of the chaplain is one that gives the love of God to His creation embodiment. God loves his children (Psalm 103:13) and He loves the sinner while yet in their sin (Romans 5:8). The chaplain goes to the saved and the sinner alike to help meet their needs as an expression of that undying love. The chaplain acts as a loving God’s hands to hold the hurting and as His feet to take the gospel of hope to those who may be hopeless. God’s love is described by the three attributes of benevolence, grace, and mercy.

### **HIS BENEVOLENCE**

***God has concern for believers, non-believers, and enemies.***

Benevolence refers to the concern God has for the welfare of those whom he loves. It becomes evident from scripture that God loves not only believers as is shown in John 15:11, “These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full”<sup>32</sup>, but He also has concern for non-believers and enemies. Romans 5:6-10 tells us that “God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us... while we were enemies we were reconciled to God.” God showed his love for all people in sending Christ to die for them. He also shows his benevolent love in

<sup>30</sup> Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1985), 260.

<sup>31</sup> Erickson, 265ff.

<sup>32</sup> All Scripture quoted is from the *The Holy Bible, New International Version* (New York International Bible Society, 1978) unless otherwise noted.

continually seeking out the lost in an effort to reconcile them to himself. Today, God continues to exemplify His love through Christians who sacrifice of themselves to minister to others. God continues to seek out persons who are lost and separated from Him. The three parables Jesus told in Luke 15 underscore this benevolence as we see God represented as the shepherd who leaves the ninety-nine in order to seek out the lost one, as the woman who searches diligently for her lost coin, and as the patient father who anticipates his wayward son's return and welcomes him back with a large celebration.

God's holiness makes him so relationally transcendent from the human race which is corrupted by sin that it seems he would be unconcerned for them, but God is immanent in providential activity and in redemptive activity with people.<sup>33</sup> "For this is what the high and lofty One says - he who lives forever, whose name is holy; I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly, and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isaiah 57:15). For God, benevolence is an active matter of love.

For the Emergency Service Chaplain, benevolence too must be an active matter of love. It is not because of the love welling up from the heart of the chaplain, but from the love that overflows from the heart of God through the chaplain. If God so loved the world that He gave His only son to die for them, surely the chaplain must be in the position to give time and effort into meeting their needs. As the role of the chaplain takes him outside of the church family and directly in the path of those who are not believers and even those who are enemies of God, he has the opportunity to emulate God's benevolence and provide a witness to His love.

***Benevolence is an active love***

## **HIS GRACE AND MERCY**

Grace is the attribute of God that is used to describe his "free and tender affection to those who have no merit or deserving, on whom God bestows freely the tokens of his love and pardon for sins".<sup>34</sup> Mercy refers to the act of God in remaining faithful to His covenant with Israel regardless of how unfaithful they had been. In the New Testament, mercy refers especially to the fulfillment of his promised kindness through the saving work of Christ.<sup>35</sup> God's mercy is his "tenderhearted, loving compassion for his people. It is his tenderness of heart toward the needy."<sup>36</sup> Grace expresses His free and

***Grace is an attribute of God, Mercy is an action.***

<sup>33</sup> G.R. Lewis, "Attributes of God," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1984), 451.

<sup>34</sup> William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies* (McLean, Virginia: MacDonald Publishing Company, 1990), 198-99.

<sup>35</sup> *The New Westminster Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. Henry Snyder Gehman (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1976), 609.

<sup>36</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 295.

loving affection to those who do not deserve it. Mercy is the moving to meet the needs of someone else. They together form another part of the attribute of God called love. God deals with people not on the basis of their merit or deserving, but rather according to their need. Instead of basing his dealings with us on our merit, they are based on his goodness and generosity.<sup>37</sup>

The Bible gives ample evidence of God's grace and mercy. Paul says in Ephesians 2:7-9, "that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God - not because of works, lest any man should boast." If God were to give each person what they earned or deserved, there would be none saved at all. The story of the woman caught in sin and brought to Jesus in John 8:1-11 is another example of how God acts toward us in the realm of grace. God's grace is boundless. He gives to men abundantly from the riches of his grace. Ephesians 1:6-8 tells us "In him we have the redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace which he lavished upon us." Erickson concludes, "There is a generosity to this grace of God. He gives abundantly."<sup>38</sup>

## CONCLUSION

The work of the Emergency Service Chaplain thrusts him into the lives of those who have encountered trouble and crisis. Many times the chaplain and certainly the world might conclude that the people "had it coming" and that they deserve any suffering they may encounter. The chaplain is called upon to minister to people who sometimes may not appreciate the ministry and from all worldly logic do not deserve the help being offered. Indeed if the chaplain considers his town as a whole he himself may judge them to be unworthy and conclude that the best merit from him is indifference. Here is where the grace of God being shown through the life of the chaplain as he goes about his ministry to the undeserving and the unlikely reflects the grace of God to the world. The chaplain is called to minister to those in crisis because God's grace requires it of him. The Emergency Service Chaplain is formed more into the image of God as he lives out God's love. Paul Tillich summarized the love motivation for action by saying, "The absoluteness of love is its power to go into the concrete situation, to discover what is demanded by the predicament of the concrete to which it turns."<sup>39</sup>

***Chaplains are called to minister to those who may be "unworthy".***

<sup>37</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 294.

<sup>38</sup> Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 295.

<sup>39</sup> Paul Tillich, *Systematic Theology*, Volume 1 (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago Press, 1951), 152

## ***FIRE CHAPLAINCY IN THE LIFE AND TEACHING OF JESUS CHRIST***

The ultimate expression of God's love is, of course, Jesus Christ. Jesus identified with sinful man while setting the example of sinlessness. He walked alongside the common folk and ministered to leadership. He cared for the keepers of the law, the breakers of the law, and even those who knew not the law. He recognized the need of all men for a savior and was sent from God to meet that need. W.T. Conner wrote, "In Christ God himself entered the contest on our side and did something for us."<sup>40</sup> The life of Jesus Christ and the teachings he left point toward a person who was keenly aware of others in need and moved to meet those needs. As the savior Jesus is still aware of and moving to meet the needs of people in crisis.

### **WHAT HE DID**

A good example of Jesus' actions in benevolent love is found in the story of Lazarus in John 11:1-44. The last time Jesus had been in Bethany the people had tried to stone him. Now the disciples were concerned about his return to that place. He was posed with the decision of going to back to possible danger in order to help someone in need. It is Thomas, yes "Doubting Thomas", who makes the declaration to the other disciples, "Let us go also, that we may die with him." Jesus did go to Bethany and met Lazarus' family at their point of need. God expects His servants to put off whatever hindrances may keep them back and to go and meet people at their point of need, sharing His benevolent love as they go.

***God expects us to  
put off hindrances  
and go to meet  
needs.***

### **THE COMPANY HE KEPT**

Jesus was criticized by religious leaders for the company he kept and the activities he was involved in. He seemed to have aimed a great deal of his personal ministry to those who would not be reached by the normal activity of religion. Matthew Levi was a person who would have had great difficulty in finding God through the ministry of the organized religion. Although he was a Jew, he had sold out to the Roman government to become a tax collector. He would have been unwelcome if not outcast by the synagogue, yet he was open to the ministry of Jesus and willing to follow when Jesus came to him where he was. Harper suggests that Matthew would have gathered his old associates together so that he might confess Jesus before them, and

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<sup>40</sup> Walter T. Conner, *The Gospel Of Redemption* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1945).

***People in crisis are in need of immediate intervention.***

that Jesus was more than happy to attend such meetings (Mark 2:15-17).<sup>41</sup> Jesus answered the criticism by saying, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.”(Mark 2:17) Jesus focused on ministering to those who were most in need of and open to ministry. The Emergency Service Chaplain imitates this priority of Jesus when he responds to the most pressing needs in Jesus’ name. People in crisis are in need of immediate intervention and assistance. This response must come while the crisis is still occurring and precipitating openness to ministry.

## **THE THINGS HE TAUGHT**

The most prominent teaching of Jesus in regard to the work of the chaplain comes in his response to a Pharisee who questioned him concerning what he must do to inherit eternal life in Luke 10:17ff. When Jesus affirmed to the lawyer that he should keep the law which reads to love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself, he asked further of Jesus who his neighbor was. The lawyer may have been sincere in his question, but probably was trying to find a “loophole” to excuse himself through. Moffat notes that “instead of agreeing to act on his own high principle, the jurist seeks to evade the issue and to excuse himself for this hesitation by pleading the prior theological difficulty of defining a neighbor.”<sup>42</sup> Regardless of the question’s motivation, Jesus answers him by telling a parable.

In reply Jesus said; a man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him’, he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expenses you may have.’ Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers? The expert in the law replied, “The man who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.” (Luke 10:30-37)

***Chaplains can be like the Good Samaritan when responding to needs.***

Stanley Grenz calls this “perhaps the grandest illustration and admonition to the disciples of the Lord to be a compassionate people.”<sup>43</sup> The Samaritan “took pity” on the traveler, the same verb being used here as it is in describing the compassion Jesus showed to

<sup>41</sup> David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh* (New York, New York: Harper & Brothers Publishing, No Copyright Date Given).

<sup>42</sup> James Moffatt, *Love in The New Testament* (New York, New York: Richard R. Smith, Inc., 1930), 120.

<sup>43</sup> Grenz, *Theology For The Community of God*, 126.

the needy. For the Samaritan, the emotion of pity and his compassion for the traveler translated into action as he took care of the needs of the unfortunate one, binding his wounds and providing for his care. Moffatt concludes that this story is a working illustration of Hosea 6:6, where God pleads, “For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” Hosea did not separate love of God with love to one another. Jesus too, along with the New Testament writers saw love to God and love to one’s fellows as flip sides of the same coin.<sup>19</sup> James declares, “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faithful is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world” (James 1:27). Personal responsibility to one another holds a place as important as personal holiness. Paul says, “Clothe yourselves with compassion” (Colossians 3:12), and Carry each other’s burdens, in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

## CONCLUSION

The Emergency Service Chaplain is called upon to help meet the needs of those experiencing crisis in their lives. Through the teaching of our Lord we see that this calling is simply an extension of that which God has called all His children to do. However, just as there were many ways for the two religious leaders to avoid “getting their hands dirty” and helping the traveler, there are many ways for ministers today to stay clear of some intense needs. The chaplain who goes to those experiencing crisis, those who are baring their wounds, those who are “off the road” because of life’s trauma, are the chaplains who pass the basic test of loving a neighbor.<sup>44</sup> How does the role of the chaplain fall into line with the life and teaching of Jesus Christ? “The chaplain is a servant, much as Christ served those around him. Jesus Christ ministered to people of all kinds. He worked with the tax collectors and the harlots and the sinners. He took his message and himself out into the world to the places where he found the need. The chaplain who is out on the streets among the needy people, that chaplain is doing the work of Christ. He is bringing salt and light to the disheartened and those in the dark. Chaplains have two things to offer: themselves, in loving caring service, and a message of hope and renewal found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Either of these alone remains inadequate for the situation, but combined together they have transforming power.”<sup>45</sup>

***The work of the Chaplain falls in line with the life and teaching of Christ.***

<sup>19</sup>Moffatt, *Love in The New Testament*, 123.

<sup>44</sup> Johnny Ross Padalino, *Overcoming the Fear - Learning to Care: Training in Crisis Intervention From A Christian Perspective* (Fort Worth, Texas: A Doctor of Ministry Project for Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996).

<sup>45</sup> James D. Berkley, in *Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology*, ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1994), 478.

## ***FIRE CHAPLAINCY IN THE MISSION AND WORK OF THE CHURCH***

***The Kingdom role  
of the Church  
influences the  
work of the  
chaplain.***

What is the role of the church in the Kingdom of God? That is certainly a question that can not be covered fully here, but it is a question that must be dealt with here in as much as it influences the ministry of the chaplain. The church is to have upward (worship of God), inward (edification of believers), and outward (evangelizing the world) emphases. Though the Emergency Service Chaplain will certainly be involved in all of these areas, his work is concentrated in the emphasis on outreach to the world. As Stanley Grenz notes, “no true community of faith can fail to set its sights outward - toward the world in which it is called to live.”<sup>46</sup> When Christ gave the command to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19-20), He called for outreach. Outreach is viewed in two formats. It can be seen as evangelism, and it can be seen as service. The work of the chaplain is squarely placed in both of these formats.

### **EVANGELISM AND SERVICE**

***Service is a calling  
of the church that  
is intricately tied  
to evangelism.***

During the last one hundred plus years the church has struggled with the relationship between evangelism and service. Evangelism is often viewed as proclamation only. Certainly proclamation carries a valid load in the burden of evangelism. Paul encouraged the Romans to be involved in the preaching of the gospel, “how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘how beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:14-15) Evangelism, however, entails much more than proclamation of the gospel to the masses and individual witnessing. Service is a calling of the church that is intricately tied to evangelism.

Chaplaincy has sometimes been looked down upon as a renegade step child by the church and sometimes pushed back into a category of “just a social service ministry”. Some of the criticism has been valid as chaplains in many settings have allowed their role to be diluted to that of a Social Worker. Chaplaincy as a field of ministry needs to re-evaluate itself and ask why it exists, and for what purpose.

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<sup>46</sup> Grenz, *Theology*, 126.

The chaplain needs to be seen as and to see himself as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the healthiest view being developed concerning the tension between service ministry and evangelism ministry is one that sees no tension at all, but rather a cooperation and symmetry between the two. Bird and George commented that “the most important evangelistic innovations of our time are a consequence of a shift from specific programming efforts to a more systemic view of the process by which evangelizing and congregationalizing take place.”<sup>47</sup> They identify one of the avenues of the process of evangelizing as *servant evangelism*, which uses creative points of contact to meet people’s needs right where they are. The Emergency Service Chaplain is using a combination or blend of service and evangelism to introduce God to people who are in hurting situations. One church used as an example by Bird and George has developed a formula that defines evangelism with the following formula; “Deeds of God’s Love + Word’s of God’s Love + Time. The chaplain is there during times of crisis to act and speak the deeds and words of God’s love. He becomes the embodiment of the gospel. Stanley Grenz notes that in addition to the task of verbal proclamation, the gospel “must also be embodied - credibly demonstrated - if others are to see and acknowledge the truth.”<sup>48</sup>

***Deeds of God’s  
love + Words of  
God’s love + Time***

## MISSIONS OUTREACH

A well-established missionary procedure in evangelizing is the identification and penetration of people groups or target groups.<sup>49</sup> Missions use this strategy in reaching out into new territories. Churches use it to reach out to new neighborhoods in their community or to reach an unreached age group. Many groups, based on age, nationality, language, economics, and others have been targeted by churches and missions organizations for specific projects in evangelism. Another of these target groups, the need *related* group is also identified by Edward Dobson. “Those of us who live in the trenches of ministry are increasingly aware of the pain people carry. That pain (emotional and physical) is one of God’s strategies to gain people’s attention.”<sup>50</sup> In Colossians 4:5, we are encouraged to “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.” The time referred to here is the window of opportunity in which people may be open to responding to the gospel and embracing God. One of

***People in  
emergency crisis  
can be a “target  
Group”***

<sup>47</sup> Warren Bird and Carl F. George, in *Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology*, ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1994), 44.

<sup>48</sup> Grenz, *Theology*, 666.

<sup>49</sup> Winston Crawley, *Global Missions: A Story To Tell* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman Press, 1985), 244.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Dobson, in *Leadership Handbooks of Practical Theology*, ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1994), 57.

***The chaplain is fulfilling a task given to the Church.***

the “windows” identified by this author is “during a crisis event”. “Death, injury, etc. cause people to consider the big questions of life. What is the purpose of my life? Why do bad things happen to me? What do I do when I can’t fix things on my own? Is there a God who cares about me? Where can I find others who will support me through this crisis?” Evangelism, the spreading of the gospel, happens when an Emergency Service Chaplain responds to help meet the needs of people during a crisis in their lives. It may occur with a spoken word of personal witness, a tender moment of prayer, or simply through the presence of one is there to care and represent the Almighty. The chaplain is to go into the situation of crisis, a sometimes hostile situation, and attempt to bring God’s peace and God’s light. As Emil Brunner put it, “The Lord sends (Christians) expressly into this hostile world”<sup>51</sup> in order “that men may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

## CONCLUSION

As the Emergency Service Chaplain ministers to the immediate and underlying needs of people in crisis, both Christian and non-Christian, he is fulfilling the role that God gave the church to reach out to the world. There is a story about a little girl who is frightened at night by a thunderstorm. She has run to her daddy’s lap and is whimpering as he reassures her she can always turn to God and ask Him for strength over fear. She agrees that God is great and God is good, but counters that right now she just needs somebody with “skin on”. The chaplain responding to an emergency incident becomes the presence of God with “skin on” and an avenue for God to share his unending love with those who need that love.

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<sup>51</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: The Westminster Press, 1962), 315.

# VICTIM ASSISTANCE

## THEOLOGICAL RATIONAL AND PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES

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## ***THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE:***

The Fire Chaplain's ministry enacts human response to the gifts of grace God has given. This ministry is a way of answering one of the highest callings of God: that human beings love one another, setting aside selfish interests to care for those who are suffering. It is an intense ministry of bringing hope into the death-shadowed valley, so intense that human strength will soon fail; only God's strength will prevail. Truly this is a ministry in which we humans become partners with our Creating God in caring for the creation.

Jesus said:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. This is the great and first commandment. And the second is like it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets.

[Matt. 22:37-40]

Jesus also said:

I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me. ...Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me. [Matt. 25:35-36,40]

In Isaiah 58:6-7, 9b-10 we find the prophet's Old Testament expression of how God desires humans to deal with their less fortunate sisters and brothers:

Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh? If you take away from the midst of you the yoke, the pointing of the finger, and the speaking of wickedness, if you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness, and your gloom be as the noonday.

All human beings are inherently valuable in the eyes of our Creating God. God calls humanity to also recognize that value, and to live lives based on love rather than on self-interest. God's call is repeatedly revealed through the Scriptures of both the Old and New Testament. When we act out neighbor-love by helping a person in need or crisis, we permit God to enter into that need or crisis through our action. Our action thus makes us partners with God in caring for the creation and is one of the very best ways for us to live eucharistically, to express thanks for the loving grace we have already received, and are receiving still, from God: Forgiveness, salvation, faith, family, friends, time, talent, treasure, and all the rest of our blessings.

The Fire Chaplain often meets people at times of devastating crisis. Fire (or other calamity) has just injured or killed someone, fire fighter or civilian, someone close to the victim(s) whom the Chaplain seeks to help, someone around whom the lives of those victims were shaped and given meaning. Or the fire/calamity has destroyed some or all of the material possessions by which they define their own identities. Often that destruction is still taking place. Usually the result is that people feel devastated.

People feel as though not only their possessions, not only their loved ones have been destroyed. They feel that their very identity, their reason for existing has been shattered. They say such things as, "My life is over," and "I cannot go on." And they mean it. The fire/calamity has created a true existential crisis. Their felt loss of identity and meaning threatens their very existence as persons. Clearly, human life includes other sorts of crises and other needs from time to time, but for these victims, firefighter or civilian, at such moments there is nothing worse.

It is into this valley of the shadow of death that the Fire Chaplain is called. The Chaplain's gift to the victim is hope. Avoiding trite phrases, probably never using the word itself, the Chaplain brings hope by caring about the victim and the victim's future. This caring, an enacting of Godly neighbor - love, is expressed in several forms using a variety of specialized techniques which the Fire Chaplain must strive to master.

The Chaplain initially makes contact with a distraught victim. The Chaplain enters the valley with the victim and shows the way back to life in the human community. The movement is from despair to hope, from present devastation to planning and building for the future, from isolation into community, even from death back into life.

To be effective, to be believable to the victim, the Fire Chaplain must be honest and sincere. Convinced that this ministry grows out of his or her own relationship with our caring God, the Fire Chaplain acts out his or her thankful response for the loving grace already received and being received still from God.

Only God's power is strong enough to sustain the Fire Chaplain through crisis after crisis at the necessary level of caring. Even the strongest person will soon be overwhelmed and burn out if relying on human strength alone. Thus the Fire Chaplain must work at growing in relationship with God, devoting time and energy to the effort. The traditional elements of prayer, study of Scripture, worship and fellowship within a community of faith, are invaluable - and all too easy to fall away from.

The Fire Chaplain's empowering relationship with God is as essential as the Fire Fighter's air bottle. When the bottle is used up, the Fire Fighter must replenish it or he or she is in mortal danger. The Fire Chaplain *must* allow grace to be replenished through attending to his or her own empowering relationship with God. The continuous refilling with the sustaining grace of the Creator *is* the Fire Chaplain's life sustaining air bottle.

## ***SOME USEFUL PROCEDURAL TECHNIQUES:***

The following is a list of procedures and their rationales which have been useful in a variety of incidents. Although they are written in an order which makes theoretical sense, in practice the steps are never clearly delineated. The Fire Chaplain must be guided by pastoral sensitivity and by common sense. Generally the steps overlap each other, but the flow of the ministry is along the lines indicated here.

### **A. ASSESS/SIZE-UP THE INCIDENT:**

What sort of incident are you responding to? What sorts of crises are you likely to encounter? Is this a crisis for the firefighters, or a routine job that is a crisis for the civilian victims? What information has dispatch provided? What does the radio traffic tell you?

Always check in with Fire Ground Command. Sometimes Command will be looking for, or even special call the Chaplain to the scene: because of firefighter injury or death, or to care for distraught civilians.

The Fire Fighter/Chaplain will, of course, first work on fire ground tasks such as search and rescue, fire control, extinguishment, and overhaul. As soon as the Fire Chaplain is no longer needed as a fire fighter, or when exhaustion forces a stop, the chaplaincy role takes over. I generally make the switch after my second air bottle.

### **B: LOCATE VICTIMS:**

Usually Command or the fire fighters on scene will be able to direct you. If necessary, ask around among the crowd of bystanders,

"Do you know who lives here? Where are they?" Remember to look for all the victims, including the survivors of the crisis: family, friends, and fellow fire fighters. The obvious victims may have others, EMT's and FF's, caring for them, with whom the Chaplain must take care not to interfere.

Try to avoid getting trapped into compiling lists or assembling all victims; this will severely limit the crisis work you could otherwise be doing. Let Incident Command assign a sector commander to victim management if necessary, but not the Chaplain if at all possible. Of course, if assigned during the emergency, the Chaplain will do this task. Pre-incident planning with the Chief makes a huge difference here.

### **C. BEGIN ESTABLISHING A RELATIONSHIP:**

Identify yourself by name and function, and express caring. "Hello Mr. [NAME], I am Larry Scofield. I am Pastor of Emmanuel Church in Corry, and I help out as Chaplain for the Fire Department. I sure am sorry to meet you under these circumstances." Ask the victim, "Are you OK?" "Is your family OK?" Pause and *LISTEN* to the answers. Avoid rapid-fire questions. Be *present* to the victim. The initial responses are often irrational. Accept them, do not challenge or argue. Reasoning will usually not work at this stage anyway. Hugs or an arm around a shoulder often work better. The primary goal here is establishing a caring relationship, not establishing the facts. (Fire Investigation will have that responsibility.)

### **D. RESTRUCTURING THE VICTIM'S WORLD:**

A first step toward hope. Ask concrete, factual questions about family structure, location of family members. "Who else lives here?" "How are they doing?" "Do you know what happened?" "Is anyone injured?" The Fire Chaplain should call for and/or escort to medical help, often an ambulance, when such help is needed.

These simple questions can be profoundly important to the devastated a victim's recovery. By engaging the victim in a relationship, listening carefully and asking about the victim's world, the Fire Chaplain is enacting the ongoing reality of the victim's life. As the victim is drawn into the relationship, his or her sense of identity and meaning is affirmed. The felt threat to continuing existence diminishes. It is primarily a subconscious process, but if given expression it would be along the lines of: "My life and my existence seem to have all gone up in smoke, but now this person is talking to me and caring about my answers as if I still matter. I guess maybe I have survived this after all".

## **E. ADDRESS IMMEDIATE NEEDS AND CONCERNS:**

Ask again about injury. (Shock often numbs and masks injury for a time.) Is everybody clothed? Adequately protected from the elements - cold, heat, rain, darkness? Do they have a place to stay overnight? Are there special items needed - medicine, glasses, teeth, other items? Are their items of special concern - especially important memorabilia or documents, weapons, ammunition, hazardous materials, cash, jewelry, bonds, keys? Are there pets? Anything the victim thinks important for the Fire Department to know about? The Chaplain is the caring and knowledgeable liaison between the victim and the Department.

Where appropriate, the Fire Chaplain should quickly relay pertinent information to Command. Often some of these special items can be salvaged. The victim gains great comfort and hope by witnessing that his or her concerns are still of interest to others and still have power to shape events. Even if a search fails, the effort is very much worthwhile. It affirms the ongoing value of the victim.

For fires, the Chaplain will need to know how to arrange emergency temporary housing at all hours. Utilizing the Red Cross or other resources to underwrite stays at local motels usually works out well. Some prior contacts with such motels often results in the availability of a special reduced "Disaster Rate" on room rental. Such contacts also help publicize the Fire Chaplaincy within the community.

## **F. PROVIDE AND INTERPRET ACCURATE AND TRUTHFUL INFORMATION:**

Frequently the victim will ask, often with great emotion, about emergency procedures and conditions. At fires, the Chaplain may hear questions such as: "Why are they chopping holes in the wall or roof? Why break windows? How bad is it? Can I go in?" At rescues, car wrecks, and medical calls there may be questions like: "Why isn't the ambulance leaving for the hospital? What are they doing to...? Will ... be all right?" The experienced Fire Chaplain will already know some of the answers. Explain carefully and simply to the victim. Sooner or later questions arise to which the Chaplain does not know the answer. This is OK! Tell the victim, "I do not know, but I will try to find out and get you an answer." Then go and ask, and interpret the answer to the victim. (It is important to cultivate a good working relationship with command level officers and to understand their function, so that the officer will take the time to talk with the Chaplain during the operation, and so that the Chaplain will be able to judge how to approach the Incident Commander without interfering with other operations.)

Again the victim gains in this phase. The concrete questions and the caring acceptance of the victims' concerns and needs counteract feelings of devastation and hopelessness in two ways:

- (1) The victims' thoughts are directed away from existential questions and feelings of the end of life. They are directed toward specific, usually manageable pieces of the overall picture, conveying the perception: This crisis is not overwhelming me after all.
- (2) The victim experiences his or her own existence and his or her power to affect events - his concerns and questions matter.

## **G. RECONNECT VICTIM WITH OWN SUPPORT SYSTEMS:**

Often neighbors and/or family show up to offer help and comfort. Step aside and allow the process to work. The Fire Chaplain is a *temporary* support. These others are the permanent system. Ask if there are people the victim needs to call. Help get the calls made: Use a cell phone if possible. Neighbors will usually allow the Fire Chaplain to 'use their phones. Radio to dispatch if the need is urgent. (DO NOT INTERFERE WITH FIRE GROUND RADIO TRAFFIC!) Use caution regarding transmitting telephone numbers and personal information over the air, as there are lots of scanners out there.

Family, friends, and neighbors constitute the primary support systems which will enable the victim to recover and rebuild his or her life, because they are the human community of the victim. Some victims will have spiritual relationships to call upon, some will not. Certainly, the Chaplain should offer to contact the victim's own pastor. More formal medical, business, and/or social service agency relationships, (e.g. doctors, insurance, the Red Cross, Family Services, etc.) also may contribute to recovery. Knowing that these will be the ongoing relationships, the Chaplain should facilitate connecting the victim with these supports and prepare to withdraw.

## **H. LEAVE TAKING AND WITHDRAWAL:**

Often some educating is helpful at this point. The victim will not know where to turn (and may still be so upset that a relative or friend will have to be educated on behalf of the victim). The Chaplain helps by urging, for example, an immediate call to the insurance agent, and perhaps by telling the victim about the work of commercial cleaning companies and dry cleaners for smoke and water stain removal. Referral to the Red Cross is often another very great help (perhaps the Chaplain can be the official liaison to notify Red Cross of the need - a working relationship should be developed prior to the fire). Other sorts of crises will require other sorts of education and referral, but the process is similar. The Chaplain should become

familiar with the resources available and procedures required in his or her own community, and carry a list of telephone numbers.

The focus here is forward looking. Before actually withdrawing the Chaplain should attempt to help the victim, family and friends develop an initial plan for the immediate future. For instance, at fires, "Where will they sleep tonight" must always be addressed. The plan can be adopted simply by the Chaplain summarizing the ground already covered while the victim or relative indicates understanding:

"Mr. [NAME] your family will stay at your sister's house tonight, right? And you are going to use the phone at Joe's house here to call your insurance agent in just a few minutes, right? First thing in the morning you need to call the Red Cross at 555-7300. You will not forget, will you?" Finally, the Fire Chaplain should, if possible, make an offer of ongoing assistance. (Victims rarely actually do call back later.) "Now I am going to give you my card. My number is printed on it, and you can call me if I can help you further. I am also writing down the number for the Red Cross to help you remember. OK?"

Once community supports have begun rallying around the victim, the plan is understood and accepted by (or for) the victim, and any questions have been addressed, then it is time for the Fire Chaplain to withdraw. An acknowledgment of the suffering is indicated, together with good wishes. "Mr. [NAME] I am sorry it turned out like this, but I am glad we have met. I hope and pray things get better for you from here on out. You have a good group of friends around you here. They are going to help you survive this crisis. I have to leave now, but you may call if you need to talk further. Good bye."

## **I. A WORD ABOUT PRAYER AND GOD TALK:**

The Fire Chaplain will have to be guided by his or her own beliefs and by great pastoral sensitivity. We are not at the fire scene to make converts of victims! Nor to pass judgment on their beliefs or lifestyle! (There is a time and place for such concerns, but not while wearing a Chaplain's hat at an emergency scene.) Whether ministering to firefighters or civilians, we are called by God and by the Fire Service to bring Godly hope and love for our neighbors to the victims of fire or other emergency. At such times actions truly do speak louder than words.

Victims will bring with them a tremendous variety of faith backgrounds and spiritual beliefs. Often a sensitive Chaplain can discern the victim's beliefs and incorporate them into the crisis ministry. At other times the Chaplain will have to rely exclusively on the actions taken as a religious figure for the victim to convey the fact of God's love. If the victim indicates prayer would be helpful,

certainly, pray. If not, it probably would *not* be helpful for the Chaplain to suggest it.

One exception to this guideline is when the incident involves injury or death. A simple, quiet prayer for the injured or deceased while quietly touching [laying on of hands] a hand or foot or some part of the body often brings great comfort to persons of faith. Be careful not to get in the way of the medic's work. I have often found out after the fact that the family was grateful to learn such ministry had been performed. Usually the injured person is fully engaged with the medics, so I do not interrupt. I simply touch whatever I can and pray. The other rescuers have come to expect this and seem to be comforted that their Chaplain is helping in ways they feel they cannot, especially at fatalities.

"Why?!" "Why did God do this to me?" The Fire Chaplain will hear these questions at times. I have no simple answers and I tell victims so. Often it seems clear that God did not cause the fire, crash, or whatever happened, some human error did. It will not help to engage the victim in a prolonged theological discussion of theodicy or human sinfulness at such a time. Loving actions and relationship will help. The Chaplain must also remember that God is not dependent on humans offering excuses for so called "acts of God," not even Fire Chaplains. It is better ministry for the Chaplain to hear and respond to the pain and suffering which lie behind that poignant "Why?"

## ***CONCLUSION:***

Notice the overall flow of the process. Just as the Fire Ground Commander integrates many procedures which overlap but have a clear progression toward a definite conclusion (size up, exposure protection, search and rescue, extinguishment, salvage, overhaul, take up and return to service), so this approach to Fire Chaplaincy also uses a number of procedures which may overlap but also have a pattern of progression toward a definite conclusion.

The Chaplain initially makes contact with a distraught victim, who to some degree truly can be said to be in the valley of the shadow of death. Through the approach suggested here, the Chaplain enters that valley with the victim and shows the way back to life in the human community. The movement is from despair to hope, from present devastation to planning and building for the future, from isolation into community, even from death back into life. Truly this is a ministry in which we humans become partners with our Creating God in caring for the creation.



# FIRE SERVICE CAREER RELATIONSHIP IMPACTS

By Jay Donnelly

*Jay Donnelly is the Executive Director of Cal-Fire Chaplain Corps. He has been a Fire Chaplain for seventeen years and the chaplain for CDF Firefighters, Local 2881 for eight years. Jay has been married for to Patty for 30 years and has to children, Brandon, 24 a firefighter for CDF and Lindsay, 20 a college student. He pastors a church in the gold country of California and has been involved with marriage ministry for seventeen years.*

*He is a twenty-eight year veteran of the fire service and has come up through the ranks from firefighter/ Paramedic to his current rank of Deputy Chief of Employee Support Services and Fire Academy Administrator. Jay is trained to deal with Critical Incident Stress Management issues, marital, problems, interpersonal relationship problems, crisis intervention, ethics and leadership, communication skills, and a myriad of other challenges that face the Fire Service family.*

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR: Careers in fire service and other emergency service fields carry with them some inherent difficulties in personal and family life. Jay Donnelly has identified five areas of personal and family impact related to working in the fire service. The following is a compilation of material from Jay's training materials and a presentation given to fire chaplains at a Federation of Fire Chaplains conference. This information should prove to be useful especially to chaplains who are also firefighters. It can also be used by chaplains who have opportunity to teach in-service classes for firefighters. Many fire chaplains fit the descriptions Jay gives of people in fire service careers and will be able to easily apply the class to their own life.

A Teaching outline and PowerPoint visual aid for this material is included in the Instructor Materials for this manual.

## ***FIVE CAREER IMPACT SYNDROMES***

***Every firefighter will identify with at least one syndrome, most with two or three syndromes.***

There are five syndromes that are consistent with the fire profession that will affect lives and can influence very negatively if one is not paying attention to business. They can affect friendships, marriages and relationships with significant others. They can affect relationships with children and, if looked at objectively, one can also say that they will probably affect doing business with peers as well. There will be at least one of these syndromes that each firefighter will identify with and most likely two or three.

### **ADRENALINE JUNKY SYNDROME**

***Firefighters thrive on adrenaline rush!***

Firefighters and other emergency service workers, including many fire chaplains tend to be adrenaline junkies (there are people in this business that may not be – there are people who are in it for the pay check, but they are very few). They can be observed talking about fires and rescues or about columns of smoke or the “out of county assignment” and knowing it’s going to a “ripper” and knowing the BC they’re with is going to find some action – and they’re pumped – yeah! They thrive on it. And there’s a cultural reality about it that helps them be very good at what they do and able to cope under stress because of the “rush” that comes with each incident.

The challenge is that because fire service personnel love that rush, it can bring them enjoyment from running calls and responding to emergency. Then they go home and back to fixing the fence, repairing the washing machine and other menial chores and they get a flat spot in their emotions due to the adrenaline dropping off and the lack of excitement. Now the people at home, spouses and families, see this and note the appearance of what looks like depression. Or the firefighter is still ramped up because they’ve been running calls. So they come home and immediately get busy doing things, any things, and the family at home doesn’t have a clue regarding what is going on. The firefighter is just “pinging” off the walls, running around. It isn’t necessarily focused, it’s just “pinging.” So there are those two situations; either the flat spot low (depression so to speak) which is typical most of the time when coming off of shift, or the hyperactivity and then the low hits later in the day.

***Coming off the adrenaline rush results in “flat” or “hyper” personality***

After four days off, the firefighter is preparing to go back on shift and the family starts seeing a change. The firefighter has been in a personality “flat spot” for four days and now begins to bustle around with excitement. They perk up and gather gear and get ready for the coming shift. During this time the family is thinking, “Now wait just a minute. The guy has been a dud for four days and now getting ready to go back to work, and has all kinds of energy.”

Another way the syndrome can play out is that the firefighter comes home and is not really doing anything; they may be tired and their spouse says, “Let’s go do something – let’s go fix this.” A little “fussin-match” gets going and the firefighter doesn’t want to put up with it and they leave. They go down to the coffee shop or the pub and there’s this little special waitress there who is very nice to them and she says, “What’s the problem?” The firefighter replies, “Well I’m a firefighter and my wife doesn’t understand and I’m trying to come home and relax and she wants me to do all this stuff and it’s a pain.” And the waitress says, “Oh you poor thing – you’re a firefighter, well bless your heart.” She really starts pouring on the “schmooze” and all of a sudden there comes a little bit of an adrenaline rush going, and the firefighter thinks to himself, “Hey she thinks I’m pretty cute.” And it happens: they’re not really looking for anything; they’re just feeling better now. Cool, the firefighter decides, “I’ll go back and we’ll work it out.” Well then, three or four times of that and they keep going back to the same spot and telling their tail of woe to the particular waitress and then all of a sudden, there’s a connection. Full-blown affairs get started from just that: seeking to feel better. When the waitress starts schmoozing a bit, the little adrenaline rush returns and brings the good feeling. It’s kind of like a drug. But what happens is an emotional “soul tie” connects as well and then you have trouble. The author has assisted fire service marriages out of that particular syndrome a number of times.

*Family problems ensue when firefighters look elsewhere for support*

From the adrenaline junkie syndrome, fire personnel tend to look for the next new toy that creates the same kind of adrenaline rush: Fast boats, fast cars, four wheel drives, and motorcycles. It’s all about getting that rush. One has to be careful that this does not adversely affect interpersonal relationships. As a culture, emergency service people tend to carry a heavy debt ratio because of the syndrome. They buy toys to satisfy the adrenaline need and then have to pay for them, then comes the overtime which only exacerbates the problem, and on and on it goes.

*Always looking for the next exciting toy*

## **COMPARTMENTALIZED LIFESTYLE SYNDROME**

This situation can contribute to a lot of jealousy in families. Firefighters have two different lives, the station life and the home life, and they don’t allow the two to mix. They’ve been gone from home for a shift and come home and their significant other asks, “Hey what happened?” They say “Oh nothing – just another shift.” The spouse is thinking, “Now wait a minute, they’ve been gone for all these hours, they must be doing something – they can’t be sleeping for all those hours.” The reply may include a very vague, “You know, running calls, saving lives, etc., etc.” but there is no information exchanged.

*Keeping life in compartments can alienate family*

***When  
communication  
falters,  
imagination  
takes over***

Or the firefighter is gone for a week on a project fire and there's still no real information exchange when returning home. *They have a compartmentalized life.* There's a mentality involved here that thinks well, it's dangerous and there's blood and guts and all this stuff and if I really tell them what's going on they'll worry." So it is just left unspoken, and non-communicated. Or families and friends are told "half-truths" and pretty soon loved ones at home start wondering. Loved ones are on the outside trying to look in and get frustrated or suspicious. They start to think, "I'm not getting the whole scoop, something's going on, I bet there's an affair going on... I bet, I bet, I bet..." and if the firefighter doesn't fill in the details, their loved ones will. They will develop the picture they perceive. They may not want it to look that way, but they are not getting the truth so they assume something is being hidden, something must be wrong. They assume something must be being hidden and they have the whole shift to develop the scenario in their head and then the firefighter walks in the door. The loved one asks, "How'd you shift go?" and the firefighter says, "Oh just fine".....and they go POW! The accusations start to fly and the firefighter is wondering, "Hey, hey, hey, why are you so upset?"

The loved ones are left on the outside. They have been sheltered completely out of any quality information about the life lived at the station - and it is a life. Its family and the loved ones see it. They'll see the firefighter run across one of the buddies at Wal-Mart and there is the camaraderie and the loved ones can't connect with it. So the information gap must be bridged to allow the loved ones to become a complete part of the firefighter's life.

Another aspect of the compartmentalized lifestyle is when plans are made to do things with the "station family." The shift is making plans to go out with a co-workers new ski boat. The firefighter calls family (who is waiting for them to come off shift) and says, "Hey I'll be home later, Joe Blank just got a new ski boat we're going to go check it out." Then the day gets longer and the firefighter arrives home about "O Dark Thirty." The "home" family has just missed out on time with the firefighter and that can put tension and strain on the relationship. Fire personnel need to have an understanding about the fact that they must positively invest in home life and communicate with family.

***Home family vs.  
Fire Family***

Another issue that can contribute to this syndrome is Plans are made to do things with the "home family" and then what happens? Ring... overtime! Ring... mandatory call back! Immediately, the firefighter is gone and... no home life! Overtime may need to be turned down occasionally. "Well, I can't come in right now but I can come in a couple of hours." We need to change the situation where the "home" family is always coming in second to the Fire Department family. They can't get any quality information, they can't get quality

time. They feel like they are always second choice and so there's this tension that starts to build.

Another issue that can build the compartmentalized lifestyle is when firefighters make a mistake. Fire fighters make lots of decisions and do lots of positive things every day and every shift. It is safe to say they make lots of decisions and most of the decisions are good ones. Fortunately they don't make many mistakes, but when they do it's really tough on ego and most firefighters will chew on it and think about it, beat themselves up over it, and then take that home with them, continuing to be inwardly reflective ("I'm so ticked off with myself I cannot believe I did that") Then a child or spouse will ask, "what's the matter?" The firefighter will not admit that they made a mistake and so they are just walking around being a jerk and negatively affecting the family. It is much better to admit that a mistake was made: "Well I did this or I did that and our captain was ticked off and I feel like a dummy and I know better, etc." Everyone is going to make mistakes. The firefighter must be willing to learn from them, and share that impact with family. Open and honest sharing can result in great support from a family that is looking for a way to help their firefighter.

*Mistakes make  
for big ego  
deflation*

Critical Incident Stress reactions can also separate fire personnel from their family. There must be a willingness to talk about critical incidents with the family so they can understand why the firefighter is reacting in a certain way. One need not share all the gruesome details of what happened, but can share that this incident did indeed have a critical stress impact and it is troubling. The loved ones need to know what Critical Incident Stress is and what some of the symptoms are. They will then better know how to help. It will allow them to be a part of that aspect of the firefighter's life. Keeping family at "arm's length" is just another one of those little things that goes into the thought process resulting in suspicion.

## **JOB AND PROMOTION SYNDROME**

Currently, passion and promotion are affecting the fire service tremendously. Much of what is going on in the fire service has to do with how many classes one has taken. Fire personnel must pay attention to drawing balance here. Promotion and achievement can become the "other woman!" There is always a class or workshop to go to, the next certification that will enhance promotional chances. One can always establish this rational, "you don't understand how important this is, this class could save my life or someone else's, I really need this class," but is that really true?

*Promotions can  
become the  
"other woman"*

A fire spouse may say, "You love your job more than you love me." Most firefighters have heard that complaint at least once before. The fact is that when a spouse or loved one is saying this, its a hint that

maybe things are out of balance a little bit. The jealousy increases and the communicate breaks down and relationship starts down a turbulent trail.

There are some proactive things that can be done. Seize the opportunity to invest in loved ones while it is available, don't wait for tomorrow. Because of the nature of the job firefighters may be called back to duty, have days off canceled, or have mandatory training. Opportunity may disappear if one waits for tomorrow. Being proactive can and will make a difference in the firefighter's family life.

## RESCUER SYNDROME

*Emotional  
rescue becomes  
a trap for  
firefighters*

Firefighters are rescuers by nature and therefore ready to rescue anybody. It can be a buddy who has a deck that needs to be repaired, someone who needs their truck fixed, etc. A friend has a broken leg and has some chores that need to be done and the whole shift goes and does it, Rescue, Rescue, and Rescue.

Emotional Rescue can become a trap for fire personnel. Because they are rescuers by nature, they may have someone of the opposite sex come who is having a challenge in their life, in a relationship, or their marriage. Because firefighters are often seen as leaders; wise and astute, they share information and try to help with the problems. Those who are seeking help feel better about things and turn to the firefighter again and again and then all of a sudden there's an attachment as their rescuer. Repeatedly this person is coming with another problem and it goes on and on. One must be careful not to be trapped as an emotional rescuer; it will rob the rescuer's own family.

## CUMULATIVE STRESS SYNDROME

Firefighters tend to not manage stress well in their lives. Stress accumulates and it builds up. As a culture, the coping skills used while on duty tends to be the way stress is dealt with everywhere. Stressors coming from different sources will need to be dealt with differently. Below are some stress sources for fire personnel.

*Stressors come  
from many  
sources*

**Station and position stress:** Every firefighter has worked in a station where they can just walk in and feel the edge, the stress. It becomes intense and it is obvious that something must be done or it will affect everyone involved negatively.

**Home stress:** If one is not dealing well with issues at home they bring stressors back and forth from work, to home, and from home to work.

**Financial stress:** Buying the motorcycles, boats and fast cars, etc. to fill the need for adrenaline rush. Now all this stuff has to be paid for and the stress builds.

**Incident stress:** The adrenaline rush of going on incidents is sought after, but these same incidents also add their own measure to the stress load. Each incident adds a bit of stress until suddenly the cup is full and spilling over into other places in the firefighter's life. Anger, depression, substance abuse, marital problems, or other problems may surface when firefighters are not willing to manage their stress and build new coping skills.

## ***STEPS TO COUNTERACT THE SYNDROMES***

There are many challenges that his career can bring to life. Typically, a person will have one of the above syndromes that is very dominant in its affect on life and another that produces more subtle effect. There are some people that all five syndromes showing up as negative impacts on their lives. There is hope. Below are the steps for change related to the syndromes above.

### **BALANCE: (STEP ONE)**

Identify or recognize the syndrome or syndromes that are affecting life negatively. Take an inventory of what is of real value, because people tend to invest in what they value. The definition of insanity is to continue to do what has always been done and expect a different result. So something different must be done to expect a different result. That's part of the inventory process determining what is really valued. Is the relationship at home valued? What about spouse, boyfriend, girlfriend, etc.? A decision has to be made to invest in relationships at home. The balance of this is the career, the profession, the classes, the shifts – all those things are a reality. It does not mean they are just thrown out, but people need to be decisive and cognitive and really consider where these things fit into the balance. Because if they don't, they are rescuers by nature, and will “jump and rescue the department” every time.

Balance does not come without purposely bringing it to life and being willing to change and invest to a greater degree in relationships at home. When a serious effort is made to bring balance, the benefits will be manifest at home and at work.

***Firefighters must make a decision to invest at home***

## FOCUS: (STEP TWO)

Step Two is very powerful. Step Two is something that will probably be a significant change to focus better on communication and being a better communicator at home – where it really counts. How is that done? By becoming a better listener and learning the correct “love language” or “relationship tactical frequency” to communicate on. As a culture we are the worst communicators and the worst listeners on the planet earth. Most people need to learn and understand how to communicate. What people typically do and have been trained to do is listen to just enough information to develop a basic report on conditions in their head, develop a plan and tell loved ones what to do. People don’t listen to the rest of the issue, thinking its “fluff” and they don’t have time for it.

A firefighter’s loved ones want to communicate with them. They want to share with them. But the pervasive culture has had its effect. The passion for the fire service and profession has affected emotional ability to engage in just communication for no other purpose other than communication. Not to find the fix, not to find the plan, but just to communicate, just share information. That’s relational.

### ***LISTENING:***

Learning to hear more than the minimum required to formulate a plan in one’s mind means developing some new skills including learning to be active listeners. This involves extracting ore information from a discussion. It means asking questions of spouses. A good practice is to “say what we see” during interacting with a spouse or children. If they seem confused, one can say, “You look confused.” If they appear upset: “I see you’re upset.” Engage more in communication and be a better listener. It’s a skill that must be worked at, because in the day-to-day walk at the fire station, it’s not something most people take a lot of time to do. In fact, most firefighters are doing the exact opposite of what is described here while at work and so must make a choice to be a better communicator at home. Sometimes this means biting a lip. The firefighter is thinking, “OK, that’s enough! OK, OK, I’m ready to go from point A to point B with a story and they want to go over here and tell you about this part and then over here and tell you about this part and over here...” getting to the same point but going in a zigzag versus a straight line. That’s OK, just take the time and relax. Listen. It’s not a bad thing. It’s a powerful tool for life and will enhance career as well.

Every firefighter has been on an incident talking on the radio on the wrong TAC frequency and thinking, “They don’t know what going on.” The fact is the firefighter was on the wrong frequency and was just not communicating. Well that’s what happens in relationship communications. One can be on the wrong “frequency” (love

*Learning to hear more than the minimum required*

*Listening is a powerful tool for life*

language) and frustration builds in everybody because there is no connection.

***LOVE LANGUAGES (REFERENCE BY GARY CHAPMAN)***

The five tactical frequencies of relationships or love languages are:

- Words of Affirmation
- Quality Time
- Receiving Gifts
- Acts of Service
- Physical Touch

They are the method of communication in relationships (not restricted to marriages, but in parent-child relationships, and in any intimate relationship) It is very important to identify the primary and secondary frequency that a spouse, loved one, or child receives on. Then make the decision to go to that frequency and communicate.

***Tactical  
relationship  
frequencies***

**Words of Affirmation** are compliments and esteeming a loved one. Look for things to compliment upon. How they look, things they do, things they make, etc. Affirm the effort and not necessarily the result. If a child or wife or husband, happens to be a words of affirmation person they are typically artistic and they're whole persona, they're personality is attached to what they do. They're visionary, they're artistic and they're creative, and so it's very important that the effort be affirmed, not necessarily the result. Firefighters are very task orientated people and will leave the house for a shift and say something like, "Son, if you can get your bike fixed we'll all go for a bike ride when I get back." The firefighter is then thinking in their mind, while at the station, that all this stuff is going to happen (expectation). So when they come home from shift and maybe none of that has happened they immediately assess from the "accomplishment" perspective versus the "effort" perspective. There may have been a whole lot of effort put forth, but they do not affirm effort. They didn't even ask a question about how much effort went into it. They didn't affirm anything, just criticized and judged. And the loved ones have to defend themselves. They may say, "We are not your firefighters we're your family." Firefighters must pay attention to their attitude and what they say when affirming and esteeming. This is particularly true with children. If a son or daughter or even a spouse is showing something they've made, a drawing, a sculpture, etc., affirm the effort. "Wow, it looks like you really went put some work into this." If they are bringing something to show, they need affirmation. Loved ones tend to communicate on the same level they would best receive on. So be listening to those around and how they're connecting. That should give a hint of the frequency (love language) which must be "dialed up" to talk to them or to communicate affection and love.

***Reward the effort, not the result***

Give words of encouragement allowing family members to experience their dream. Firefighters are task oriented people as a culture, so at times dreams don't always come out the way they are originally dreamt. Being affirming does not mean there can be no correction. Affirm first and then correct. A "Words of affirmation" person will give an indication that they have been hurt by words when they say something like, "You're treating me like a firefighter" or they get real quiet. One example from a real family situation: A Fire Captain had shared with his son, "Get your bicycle fixed while I'm on my shift and when I come home we'll go for a bike ride." It was a mountain bike and the son tried for all he was worth to fix it. He worked all night long and he just couldn't understand how to get the chain repaired and back on the sprocket. He just couldn't figure it out. Well, when his Dad came home and immediately criticized his son for not fixing the bike. There was no affirmation of the effort, only criticism. That young man shut him off – that was it. He had closed the door to communication with that young man and it took a lot of effort to open it back up. One must be careful to understand that this is a very powerful issue in our lives. It's a biggie for children.

***Focusing on the other person makes for quality time***

**Quality Time** means doing things together that are not distracted by television, magazines, books, etc. Quality time is based upon wanting to spend time together and to make a difference versus, just being in the proximity and not allowing events to distract from focusing on the present.

***Ask a loved one what THEY would like to do and DO it***

Focusing on the loved one is the whole idea. Quality time allows time for listening and communicating. It provides a nurturing environment which means it is emotionally safe. The central aspect of quality time is togetherness. This does not mean proximity. In other words, if a person likes to watch football but their loved one does not, then sitting on the same sofa watching the playoffs is not the idea of quality time. They are being ignored 90% of the time. A little key that a loved one is a quality time person is when they want to along on a trip to the hardware store or often ask to go along on little errands. "Can I hang out with you?" This is an indicator of a need for quality time, not an indicator that they like to ride around. So pay attention! If the request is repeatedly refused, it may be recognized down the road, "Wow we haven't talked in a long time, what happened?" The person has been shut off. So the quality time can be recouped by inviting them to go along. Ask a loved one what they like to do and do it! Sometimes it may not be known what a loved one would like to do for Quality Time. This may present a risk to the firefighter's comfort zone, but it is worth it. Use quality time to be a good listener. It is not always important to solve the problem. Often times just listening is desired. Let the person talk and share and dream.

**Giving of Gifts** is a visual symbol of love and caring. The principle is that there is a reality in their mind that someone thought of them. It has nothing to do with the cost of the gift, it has to do with the fact that someone thought of them and made the choice to buy or make something to give. Typically if they are truly a receiving of gifts person and someone spends a lot of money, it's an insult. There is a perception that they are trying to buy affection. The bottom line is trying to show thoughtfulness and love.

An **Acts of Service** person feels appreciated and loved when something is being done for them. Doing the "honey dos" really encourages them that they are being thought of. They really receive affection by having someone look for things to do or fix without being asked. Helping out with the chores shows team work and caring. "You clean the fire station but you won't lift a hand for me." If that is heard from your spouse, your spouse is an Acts of Service person. They're always doing little things around the place, doing stuff for others. They are trying to show love the way they receive love.

*Doing the  
"honey dos"  
builds relational  
points*

**Physical Touch** means hugs, nurturing, safe touch back rubs, holding hands, kisses on the cheek, etc. It needs to be said here that if a significant other/spouse etc. is a physical touch person, nurturing and safe touch is very important. And that physical touch shouldn't escalate to sexual touch, unless the spouse institutes that level of intimacy. What will happen to a "physical touch" person is that if physical touch is used for self gain, great insult and not encouragement will be the result. The truth is that those that are close, and particularly children, are looking for that safe touch as a statement of affection and not that something is wanted from them. It should be unselfish in its presentation. Holding on lap, arm, shoulder, etc. is especially important for children and if a child is waiting at the door when a parent gets home or as soon as they step in the house and they come a running, they're looking for a hug. That is physical touch.

### **ACTION: STEP THREE**

Step Three involves strategy and tactics. What should the relationship look like? Strategy and tactics are taught in the firefighting profession every day and is thought about all the time. Firefighters roll up on a structure fire and strategically think, "We're going to hold the fire to the bedroom, we're going to do this, we're going to do that and when we're done it's going to look like this." Does anyone take that kind of time to think about their relationships and what they should look like? Strategy is simply to look ahead and then find points of advantage to make a difference, to establish what it's going to look like and identify the points of advantage for victory.

*Relationships  
involve strategy  
and tactics, just  
like fires*

If a person can evaluate losses and gains and determine what is really valued, then tactics can be applied and there can be change. “We can’t continue to do what we’ve always done or we’ll have what we’ve always had. We must do something different.” Change always brings new gains and new losses. Will family lose or gain from the present situation? A choice must be made: “My children, my marriage, or my promotion - who or what gets my quality attention?” Now from a standpoint of promotions and opportunities for assignment – the balance of this is that, loved ones know in their minds that a firefighter’s career is important, but they must sense in their heart that they have greater value than the career.

*Family can be  
the firefighter’s  
best  
cheerleaders*

**Tactics** is the application of a strategy. The first step is to identify the primary and secondary “relationship tactical frequencies” (love languages) of loved ones. Next, a person must identify his or her own and make them known to spouse or loved one. Choose to use the appropriate “frequencies” (love languages) to communicate with loved ones. Be willing to apologize and mean it for things done wrong. Really be sincere at becoming a better listener! Work at being an active listener by not answering a matter before hearing the whole issue. Be observant of body language (of both people involved). Affirm and ask questions to gain perspective. Recognize when to agree to disagree on some issues and don’t always have to “win the point.” Be willing to just gain knowledge about the situation.

If a firefighter will involve family in their career, they will be the best cheerleaders and the firefighter won’t feel like they have to carry the load alone.

References:

Book by Gary Smalley (Love Languages)  
Five Syndromes by Chaplain Jay Donnelly

# HEALING GRIEF

## ROLE OF THE FIRE CHAPLAIN

**Peggy Sweeney Rainone**

*About the Author: Peggy Sweeney Rainone, founder and president of **The Sweeney Alliance**, is an EMT-B and formerly a volunteer firefighter and mortician. She has developed and facilitated numerous workshops on coping with grief and life-altering events for professionals and families and has reached out to her community by way of support groups for bereaved parents and children. She offers help to emergency response and public safety personnel through her **Grieving Behind the Badge** training program. Both the International Labor Communications and the Western Labor Communications Associations have recognized Peggy for outstanding achievement in the field of labor journalism. You may contact Peggy through her website at [www.sweeneyalliance.org](http://www.sweeneyalliance.org) or by e-mail at [peggy@sweeneyalliance.org](mailto:peggy@sweeneyalliance.org).*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Although most people associate grief with the death of someone loved, this is not the only reason we grieve. It is important to note that grief follows *any* traumatic or life-altering event: a divorce, abuse, a life-threatening or debilitating illness or injury; an unpleasant emergency call. The list of grief-generating experiences is endless. Grief forces us to make decisions that transform our lives and our relationships with family and friends. At times, grief will shake the foundation of our very existence and make us question our spiritual beliefs. Grief can reach in and attack our inner soul. It can rip apart a large portion of our being and leave us with a gaping hole. Grief causes many emotions we do not want to feel. Grief is deep pain, sadness, sorrow, or a feeling of emptiness. Grief can hurl us down into a deep depression. Grief has a profound effect on how we view life and it can make us question whether life is worth living. Grief is about feelings and learning to cope with these feelings.

The emergency response community experiences an array of emotions and feelings in their day-to-day lives. The traumatic calls they respond to are, at times, overwhelming. Research shows that many fire and emergency service professionals experience nightmares, depression, substance abuse, or difficult relationships with family members and friends because of recurring trauma and grief. Because of this, the fire service chaplain must understand and be familiar with the diversity of grief. He or she must be prepared to walk the journey through grief with the firefighter, as well as the firefighter's family and friends.

Many people believe that the five stages of grief (denial and isolation, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance), if followed in succession, will resolve grief. This is not true. Grief has no set time pattern nor does it ever 'go away' completely. Grief is not simply the emotions and feelings we have during or immediately following a loss. We may find that our initial reactions to grief intensify over time. Grief can, however, be an instrument of learning about love, life and living. Grief can have a positive or negative impact on our lives. Grief is choices. We can choose to journey through our grief and at the end of our journey emerge a better person for having experienced grief (positive), or we can stuff it within our very being, try to ignore it, and fail to receive its rewards (negative).

We must keep in mind that everyone responds to grief differently. No two people will react to a shared grief experience in the same way. Although we may have similar feelings and emotions as other family members, friends and co-workers, many factors will determine the end result of our personal reactions to trauma and grief; namely, how the loss occurred, our emotional involvement with the

person or event, our previous loss experiences and what lessons we learned as children for coping with emotions and feelings. A person's intimate responses to grief are both normal and natural, and not a sign of weakness or the inability to carry out their daily responsibilities.

Grief is necessary to heal the mind and spirit. Grief involves the 'whole' person; the physical, mental, emotional as well as the spiritual self. It is not governed by a set of rules that, if followed consecutively, will erase the grief. In other words, we do not deal with one emotion or feeling and move on to the next. We do not deal with anger or sorrow for a few days and check it off your list. Rather, we flow back and forth between some of the same - or previously unacknowledged - emotions and feelings until, after many months or even years, we come to the end of our grief journey. The intensity and duration of our individual grieving process is comparative to the loss. For example, the more emotionally involved we are with the person or event, the deeper the emotional trauma and grief.

## ***MANNER OF DEATH***

We grieve whenever a loved one dies. However, the manner in which the death occurs will influence our grieving process. For example, heart attack, stroke, or motor vehicle accident, are examples of sudden death. Disbelief, shock, denial and a numbing of our senses often accompany a sudden death. Some people may be angry, consumed with guilt, or lash out at those around them. Sudden death does not give us time to say a final goodbye or tell the person how much we love them.

When death occurs as the result of a long-term illness or injury, the levels of shock and disbelief may be less intense than they are with a sudden death. Nevertheless, when someone we love is slowly dying because of cancer, heart disease, a work-related injury or Alzheimer's disease, we may still be surprised when they die. This is not an abnormal response, but rather a belief that as long as there is life, there is hope. On the other hand, some people find it very difficult to watch a family member or close friend debilitated or suffering a slow, painful death. They may silently pray for a peaceful death; an end to the torment.

Following a very sudden, traumatic death (the death of a child, suicide, line of duty death), our brain and our body acknowledge the fact that we are facing something that is almost too horrendous to cope with. Many people will experience a sense of being on automatic pilot. For example, without any outward sign of emotion - almost robotically - they will answer questions and give detailed information concerning their wishes for the funeral and burial. This seemingly detached attitude is perceived by other people as a sign that this person is

"coping well" or is emotionally unscathed by the death. This is not true at all. It is merely nature's coping mechanism. Eventually, the pain of grief will descend unmercifully.

## **LINE OF DUTY DEATH**

Throughout our lives we meet hundreds of people. Our emotional involvement varies with each life that we touch. Some of these people are mere acquaintances, while others become very close friends and confidants. These special people make a lasting impression on our hearts. We share quiet moments and intimate thoughts with them that we do not share with casual friends. We love one another unconditionally. A strong bond grows between us that will never be broken. Our lives become intertwined. We cannot imagine life without them. This special bond describes the relationship that firefighters have.

When a line of duty death occurs, the members of the fire department will be changed forever by this traumatic event. They will mourn not only the death of the firefighter, but the special relationship they had with him or her. They mourn the smile, the laugh, the gentleness or the strength. They have lost perhaps the most important person in their life.

## **SUICIDE**

The fire service contributes many elements of professional and personal stress as well as emotional trauma that influence depression. Firefighters are placed in life-threatening situations and witness human injury and death often. They may have become injured or disabled as the result of their hazardous job and believe that they are no longer of value to their department or have a purpose in life. They may be struggling with the seemingly senseless death of someone from their department. However, their co-workers *appear* to be adjusting to these same situations with no apparent trouble. No one talks about the incident or the feelings they have inside. He or she assumes that everyone else is coping with the stress; hence, something must be wrong with *them*. Rather than asking for help - which may be perceived as weak - they will turn their feelings and thoughts inward. As each new incident or personal struggle occurs, they slip deeper and deeper into depression. It is no wonder then that the fire service has one of the highest suicide rates in America.

When someone dies, it is never easy for his or her family and friends to journey through grief. Nevertheless, when someone has committed suicide, the trauma of the death compounds the emotional devastation. The survivors must not only cope with grief, but with the stigma that surrounds a death by suicide as well.

Whatever your personal beliefs and feelings are concerning suicide, you must first and foremost be compassionate and sympathetic towards the survivors of this tragedy. You must not, in any way, judge their loved one for an act you may perceive as weak, a result of a mental illness, or against your spiritual beliefs. It is imperative that you provide the family and the department the best you have to offer. If you believe you cannot serve in this capacity without negative feelings, then ask a fellow clergyperson to assist as caregiver. The family and friends need love and support, not rejection.

## ***THE ROLE OF THE FIRE SERVICE CHAPLAIN***

When a firefighter dies, either in the line of duty or as the result of a non-duty related death, you may be asked to help their family, their department, and possibly their community cope with grief. This can be one of your most challenging roles as a caregiver. Therefore, you must not only have an understanding of grief and its effects on the human spirit, but you should have resources, such as recommended reading materials available to assist them as they heal. Your goal will be to teach them what they must do to heal their grief in order for them to reinvest in life and living following this tragedy.

For this reason, you should be in tune with your own feelings about grief. Do not force your religious beliefs on them in the hopes of helping them find comfort. Some adults and teenagers struggle with their faith in God at a time like this. You must respect these feelings. Some people may seek comfort for their grief in God and church. On the other hand, some may turn away from God because they are angry with Him. These feelings are part of the grief process.

## **ASSISTING BEREAVED FAMILY MEMBERS**

Although your first concern will be for the deceased's spouse and children, you may find that other relatives - siblings, grandparents, cousins, etc. - may need your guidance too. Have resources for healing grief available. If you will be officiating at the funeral, make every effort to personalize the eulogy. Be sure to take this opportunity to visit with many family members to glean their memories about the deceased.

## ***THE SPOUSE***

Men and women cope with grief and trauma differently. Women are more apt to talk about feelings and express their emotions openly, while men are reluctant to share their thoughts and feelings with others. When a spouse dies, the surviving wife or husband no longer has a partner to share the day-to-day responsibilities of the marriage. This can be quite overwhelming. The deceased firefighter provided income and companionship, as well as help with rearing children and sharing the tasks of running a household. In supporting the bereaved spouse: you may find it helpful to compile a list of contact people they can call when they need help with chores around the home or someone to take care of their children in order that they can have some time to themselves.

## ***THE CHILDREN***

Adults are seldom prepared to cope with their own grief, much less the grief of a child they love. As a result, children become the “forgotten victims.” We assume children recover from the death of a loved one quite readily. Do not be fooled. This is not usually the case. Adults often ignore the visible signs of a child's grief; namely, acting out, unhappiness, or violence. Openly discuss feelings such as anger, guilt, loneliness and depression. Encourage them to express their grief through journaling, exercising and talking with others who share a similar pain. When you offer loving support and guidance to a child, you are preparing them to cope with traumatic events they will encounter as adults.

Children, even as young as toddlers, are affected and do grieve. It is important to continue their normal routine as much as possible. They will need tender, loving care although it may seem that they are adjusting to life after the funeral, it is imperative to keep the lines of communication open. Do not be afraid to share your feelings and frustrations with them. Don't shy away from talking about the deceased person or asking the child how they are feeling. Be aware of adolescents and teens who may experiment with drugs or alcohol as a means of coping with their grief and emotional pain.

## ***THE PARENT***

The death of a child is the most traumatic loss experience. When a child dies, it will take many years for the parents to cope with their pain and sorrow. They must learn to survive in a world without their child. Family and friends who have not had a similar experience do not understand the day-to-day struggles and the unique grief that

accompanies the death of a child. Thoughts of suicide are commonplace. If there is a support group for bereaved parents in their hometown, encourage them to attend.

## **ASSISTING THE DEPARTMENT FOLLOWING A LINE OF DUTY DEATH**

Following a line of duty death, your role as chaplain will not be limited to your guidance before and immediately after the funeral. Your help will be needed for a very long time. Firefighters experience a grief that few civilians understand. A line of duty death impacts the department to its very core. The traumatic event may cause nightmares, anxiety, anger or guilt. Firefighters may doubt their self-worth as a community servant or, worse yet, question whether anyone appreciates the risks they take or the need they have to be the professional they are.

Most civilians do not understand what brotherhood and camaraderie mean. For the firefighters, it was more than *just* a co-worker who died. It felt as if a brother or sister or best friend died. A line of duty death changes the dynamics of grief. This grief pain reverberates throughout the fire service community. It touches every man, woman and child who loves a firefighter. This tragedy will alter lives and will challenge even the strongest individual.

Even though some departments may offer a critical incident debriefing, it will be your responsibility as chaplain to assist the healing process by providing support services and resources for healing emotional pain. Programs on healing grief should be made available for not only the members of the department but their families as well. Another good outlet for the firefighters is creating a 'memory album' for the bereaved family. The firefighters can include pictures from the department and personal letters or notes telling of happy events they shared with the deceased firefighter. This gift will be cherished forever.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Grief is part of life. The emotional pain of grief can bore a hole into our soul. If we allow it to fester, it will slowly devour our existence. We can take grief and bury it, or we can digest it, feel it, and let it make a positive impact on us. We can use our experiences with grief to make a profound difference in the lives of others.

No one should ever walk the path of grief alone. Yet everyday, adults and children cope with the pain of grief by themselves. Grief can be a very frightening and overwhelming experience, filled with an

array of emotions and feelings. As chaplain, you must be a special friend who is willing to walk with them through grief. Hold their hand tightly. Guide them around the many obstacles in their path. Surround them with love and lift them up when their days are long and lonely. Reaffirm their simple achievements and acknowledge that they are making progress in healing. You must be willing to listen to people's stories of tragedy and grief and openly share your grief experiences with them, no matter how painful it is for you. You must be committed to making a positive difference in the lives of adults, as well as children. You must teach them that certain things in life are not in their control. You must help them understand that, in order for them to heal their grief, they must let go of anger and guilt.

You have chosen to help adults and children cope with life-altering events and grief. This is a privilege that should not be taken lightly. You have been blessed with special gifts and talents that others do not have. Use them wisely. The best gift that you can give the firefighters and the families you serve is yourself. Your efforts will be richly rewarded.

# FUNERAL TRADITIONS

A SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICES OF  
DIFFERENT FAITHS RELATED TO  
DEATH AND FUNERALS.

*Editors Note: The following is a collection of information collected from different sources. Effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information, but chaplains should always check with local leaders of faith groups to determine current practices in their area.*

# ***THE CATHOLIC FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction to the Roman Catholic Church**

Of all the Christian religions in the world, the Roman Catholic Church is the largest, claiming approximately one billion members worldwide. In the United States there are about fifty-five million members.

Catholics believe that Jesus Christ was the founder of their Church, since He was the one who brought salvation to the world. They also believe that the Church has preserved the teachings of Christ and that the Holy Spirit guides the Church through its ministry.

The Pope is the head of the Church and is the Bishop of Rome. The College of Cardinals serves directly under the Pope and take care of the administrative duties of the Church, as well as electing a new Pope when it becomes necessary. Archbishops serve as heads of archdiocese, which are geographical groupings of the many dioceses across the world. Individual Bishops then preside over a geographical grouping of the hundreds of parishes, with each parish being served by a Monsignor or Priest.

In regard to funeral rites, the Roman Catholic Church believes that all Catholics should be buried from the Church with a Mass. There is no actual charge for being buried from the church. The funeral director should be able to guide the family as to the practices if an honorarium is customarily given to the celebrant.

The appropriate place to conduct a funeral service is in the church where the individual has received the sacraments over his or her lifetime. Theologically this belief is based on the words of St. Monica, the Mother of St. Augustine. As she lay dying, she said to her son, "When I die, dispose of my body any way you wish. All that I ask of you is that you remember me at the altar of God".

## **Notification of Clergy**

The practice of notifying the deceased clergyman when the death occurred was at one time a common as well as sensible practice. Today however, this practice can in no way be considered the usual practice. Factors such as the time of death, the place where the death occurred, and the relationship between the family and clergy each play a role in the family's decision as to the appropriate time to notify the clergy that the death has occurred. This might especially be true in those cases when the death was expected and where the sacrament of the sick had already been administered.

## **Removal of the Remains**

Generally speaking there are no Church restrictions that would prohibit removal of the remains at the time of death. In those cases where the deceased was a clergy or the member of a religious order there may be delays in making removal should there be a desire for special prayers by members of the order prior to removal.

## **Preparation of the Remains**

There are no specific restrictions as to the preparation of the remains of laypersons. Religious articles worn by laypersons should be removed, recorded and replaced after the preparation of the body. The family should then be asked if these religious articles are to be left on the body or removed and returned to the family prior to final disposition. . If the deceased is a clergyman or a member of a religious order, there may be restrictions as to the preparation of the remains. For instance, in some communities it may be requested that the embalming be done in the convent, monastery or rectory rather than in the funeral home. Since the church is considered the family of clergy and members of religious orders, the funeral home should check with the individual within the church, monastery or convent to obtain instructions and authorization to prepare the remains.

## **Dressing and Casketing the Remains**

A deceased layperson should be dressed in clothing selected by the family. Members of the clergy will be dressed in the robes of the station of their priesthood. Members of religious orders should also be attired in the robes of their position. In some religious communities, the role of dressing and casketing the clergy or members of a religious order may be the responsibility of designated members of the specific order.

Religious objects may be placed in the hands, as requested by the family or church officials. The rosary beads are most commonly used, and are usually placed in the deceased's hands. A Crucifix, sacred heart or other objects of religious significance may be placed in the head panel, foot panel, on or near the casket.

## **Pre-service Considerations**

At the time the casketed remains are ready for viewing, they are placed in the funeral home stateroom or chapel, the church or some other appropriate place. In addition to the casket, vigil candles are normally placed at each end of the casket. A prie dieu is placed in front of the casket and a crucifix behind the foot panel of the casket. A Mass Card stand should be placed at a convenient position near the register stand or in the chapel. Prayer cards may also be provided by the funeral home. Depending upon the location chosen for visitation and viewing,

the playing of music and the displaying of flowers may or may not be used

### **The Wake**

A Rosary Service or Wake will usually be held in the funeral home, family home or church the evening before the funeral Mass. The purpose of the Rosary or Wake is to, provide the community the opportunity to share with the family a series of prayers. It is meant to offer a time of reflection on the meaning of life, death and eternal life. A priest, a layperson, a member of the family, or even the funeral director may lead this service. If a priest is to lead the service, the time should be set only after direct communication has been made with the priest. This service is normally scheduled by the family and approved by the church during the funeral arrangement conference. The priest is free to substitute various scripture readings where circumstances indicate a different reading would be timelier. The people in attendance may recite portions (responses) or for simplicity the priest may conduct the whole service. The wake service is not meant to replace the funeral Mass.

### **Pre-Mass Consideration**

The funeral Mass will normally take place at the church. There are several options that may determine the activities of the funeral home staff, the family and those who will be attending the funeral Mass. If the family chooses to meet at the funeral home prior to the Mass they may be led in a series of prayers prior to leaving for the church. If a priest is in attendance he may lead the prayers. However, a layperson, family member or the funeral director may also lead the prayers. At the appropriate time, the funeral director may announce the departure to the church and dismiss the friends, allowing them to pay their last respects before moving outside to their automobiles. After the friends have gone, the family can then be given time for a final private farewell. After the family returns to their automobiles, the funeral home staff can close the casket, placing the Crucifix on top of the casket head panel and prepare to move in procession to the church.

## **The Catholic Funeral Rite**

(The following is the Rite outlined and promulgated by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of the United States of America. This Rite will have variations according to Conference of Catholic Bishops in their particular country.)

The following information was taken from the Order of Christian Funerals with Cremation Rite, published by Catholic Book Publishing Company ©1998.

## **Vigil for the Deceased**

- Introductory Rites
  - Greeting
  - Opening Song
  - Invitation to Prayer
  - Opening Prayer
- Liturgy of the Word
  - Old or New Testament Reading
  - Responsorial Psalm
  - Gospel
  - Homily
- Prayer of Intercession
  - Litany
  - The Lord's Prayer
  - Concluding Prayer
- Concluding Rite
  - Blessing

## **Transfer of the Body to the Church or the Place of Committal**

- Invitation
- Scripture Verse
- Litany
- The Lord's Prayer
- Invitation to the Procession
- Procession to the Church or to the Place of Committal

## **Funeral Mass**

- Introductory Rites
  - Greeting
  - Sprinkling with Holy Water (recalling the deceased Baptism)
  - [Placing of the Pall]
  - Entrance Procession
  - [Placing of Christian Symbols]

Liturgy of the Word  
Old Testament Reading  
Responsorial Psalm  
New Testament Reading  
Gospel  
Homily  
General Intercessions  
Liturgy of the Eucharist  
Final Commendation  
Invitation to Prayer  
Silence  
[Signs of Farewell]  
Song of Farewell  
Prayer of Commendation  
Procession to the Place of Burial

### **Rite of Committal**

Invitation  
Scripture Verse  
Prayer over the place of Committal  
Committal  
Intercessions  
The Lord's Prayer  
Concluding Prayer  
Prayer over the People  
Special Rites (e.g. Military, Fraternal Organizations, etc.)

Note: The above is an outline of current practice. It is important to contact the priest who is to celebrate the funeral prior to making Departmental arrangements. It is also a good idea to bring a copy of the Federation Funeral Rite for the priest to review and use.

Other publications of interest regarding celebrations: Sourcebook of Funerals and Sourcebook of Weddings. Both are published by Communication Resources, Inc. 4150 Belden Village St. NW, Canton, Ohio 44718 [www.ComResources.com](http://www.ComResources.com)

### **Guidelines for Cremation**

The Church, through the centuries, has followed the practice of burial or entombment after the manner of Christ's own burial entombment -out of respect for the human body and faith in the resurrection. It is still the express will of the Church that this hallowed and traditional practice be maintained. However, recognizing particular circumstances and varying cultures and customs in different

parts of the world, the Church issued an instruction in 1963 on cremation which. Allows some latitude under certain conditions for those Catholics who request their bodies be cremated.

It is evident that the Church no longer prohibits cremation, as long as cremation is not chosen out of any anti-Christian motive or antagonism. However, because the Church will allow cremation does not mean the Church has no exceptions as to how cremation will fit into the scheme of the Catholic Funeral Liturgy.

Because of the structure of the Roman Catholic liturgy and the long-standing tradition of honoring the body of the deceased, the Church presumes that cremation is a process that takes place after the funeral mass and final commendation. It is an alternate option to burial or entombment.

There are always exceptions to every rule or guideline but the norm for Roman Catholics who choose cremation over burial or entombment, is to follow the scheme set out in the Order of Christian Funerals.

1. Wake service (with the body present)
2. Funeral Mass (with the body present)
3. Final Commendation to take place at:
  - a. Cemetery for earth burial
  - b. Mausoleum for entombment
  - c. Cemetery for cremation
  - d. Church for cremation
  - e. Crematory chapel for cremation

When cremation is chosen there is a fourth step beyond the final commendation. The remains (cremains/ashes) are to be buried or entombed in consecrated ground or a columbarium.

Under no circumstances are they to be left with the funeral home or crematory, taken home or scattered. They are to be given the dignity of a Christian burial. With the practice of cremation before funeralization, the Mass is discouraged. It is not permitted to bring the ashes to Church for the funeral mass.

Cremation is an exception to the normal practice of Christian Burial. Post cremation Memorial Masses are an exception to the rule and are not to be confused or seen as a substitution for a Mass of Christian Burial.

# ***THE EPISCOPAL FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction to the Episcopal Church**

The Episcopal Church is one of the traditionally liturgical denominations. With its roots in the Catholic tradition around 314 A.D., the Anglicans (so called because of their decendancy from the Church of England) were separated from the Pope by declaration of King Henry VIII in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

Although a part of the worldwide Anglican Communion, only the churches in the United States and Scotland use the word Episcopal, which comes from the Greek word episkopos meaning bishops. This emphasizes the roles of the bishop as the chief symbols of unity and continuity with the church of all ages, and as the chief pastors.

The Episcopal Church has both Catholic and Protestant ties. They retain all of the ancient sacraments, creeds and orders of the Catholic Church while rejecting the idea that the Bishop of Rome (Pope) has authority over the Church.

Formed in the United States in 1789, there are approximately three million Episcopalians in the United States today.

## **Notification of the Clergy**

Although it is not necessary to notify the clergy prior to or at the time of a death, it is generally accepted and usually appreciated by the priests that they are notified in a timely manner.

## **Removal of Remains**

There are no restrictions for the removal of the remains of lay members. However, there may be restrictions for certain members of the clergy or different orders.

## **Preparation of Remains**

There are no guidelines as to the type or amount of preparations that are to take place. Since members of the denomination accept interment, entombment, and cremation as viable means of disposition, the use of embalming may or may not be desired.

## **Pre-Service Considerations**

For those families choosing a traditional funeral, it is customary to hold visitation at the funeral home.

## **The Funeral Service**

It is strongly encouraged that the funeral service be held in the Episcopal Church. With the exception of the altar, flowers are generally not displayed when the funeral is held in the church. The service begins with the processional of the pall-covered casket, led by the crucifier and followed by the bishop or priest, the casket bearers and casket, and the family.

The Episcopal Church is classified as a liturgical protestant church and, as such, will follow a prescribed order of worship that will be less consistent throughout the country or world. The order is found in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

Prior to or during the service, the celebration of the Holy Eucharist (communion) may be observed. The celebration provides observers an opportunity to thank God for His Blessings and to pray for the soul of the deceased.

The focus of the sermon is to teach the church's beliefs concerning death that centers on the view that death is the beginning of a new life, re-united with God. No eulogy as such is normally given as it is considered the prerogative of God to judge and commend.

The use of hymns is commonly practiced with the congregation singing songs dealing with the resurrection and God the Son's victory over death. At the conclusion of the service, the casket is taken from the church in a recessional and the pall removed prior to being placed back in the funeral coach. An American flag or flowers may be placed on the casket at this point.

## **The Committal Service**

If internment or entombment is chosen as a final means of disposition, the committal service will likely be held at the cemetery or mausoleum. The service will be composed of prayer, a short scripture reading, and the symbolic committal of the casketed remains to its final resting place. The priest will often use sand or flower petals to make the sign of the cross on the closed casket.

# ***THE LUTHERAN FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction to the Lutheran Church**

The Lutheran Church began in 1517 as a protest by Martin Luther, a Catholic priest, who refused to abide certain demands of the Pope and the Catholic Church, marking the beginning of the protestant movement. Today there are over nine million Lutherans belonging to different synods, or branches of the Lutheran Church. Within each synod the local churches are self-governing, electing synod leaders who serve a limited term of office.

The primary differences between various synods are those of observable rites and ceremonies. The doctrines upon which the churches are founded remain similar. Because of the differences, the funeral rite may vary between synods and even churches.

## **Notification of Clergy**

Unless otherwise expressed by a local pastor, it is usually not necessary to notify clergy at the time of death. The family's relationship with the church and pastor will often determine the appropriate point of clergy contact.

## **Removal of Remains**

There are no restrictions or requirements imposed by the church when a member dies. The funeral home staff can expect to make removal when released by civil authorities.

## **Preparation of Remains**

Preparations are usually based on family choice. Embalming is permitted if desired.

## **Dressing and Casketing Remains**

There are no special requirements as to clothing or casketing.

## **Pre-Service Considerations**

Traditionally the funeral was held in the church and this is still a preference among most Lutherans. It is not however, a church requirement and location is left up to the family. Since Lutheran churches are liturgical in their worship style, the location may play a role in the type of funeral held. Flowers may be placed in the church.

## **The Funeral Service**

If the funeral is held in the church, much of the religious paraphernalia that accompanies liturgical services will be used. With the altar as the focal point of the church, the use of acolytes, a cross, candles, a pall, and in some cases incense are a part of the funeral service. Rubrics will be found in the hymnal and other readings may be used.

The use of the pall dictates a closed casket service and often results in viewing the deceased in the narthex of the church before the service. The pall is placed on the casket just prior to the processional into the church. The cross bearer would lead the procession followed by the pastor, the casket bearers and casket, and the family. Communion may be offered as a part of the service. A recessional will return the party to vehicles and final burial. Cremation is discouraged but may be used in some cases. Funerals held at a funeral home may more closely resemble non-liturgical services.

## **The Committal Service**

Internment and entombment are the most often preferred means of final disposition. The service will usually include prayer, scripture reading, and the committal of the body to its final resting place. Flower petals or earth may be used to make the sign of the cross on the casket.

# ***THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction to the Church of Christ Scientist**

The Church of Christ, Scientist is rooted deeply in protestant Christianity, whose followers are members of a religious movement that stresses spiritual healing. Christian Science is based on the teaching that God is wholly good and all-powerful and that man is created by Him. Everything eternal, spiritual, and good is called reality. Whatever is unlike God – injustice, sin, sickness, or grief is called unreal. The principle text, Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures, written by Mary Baker Eddy in 1875, contains the full statement of Christian Science beliefs. Mrs. Eddy founded the church in Boston, Massachusetts in 1879.

Included among the good and real is health, and among the unjust and unreal, disease. Because healing is brought about through spiritual understanding, members of the Church of Christ, Scientist, normally do not seek medical help, including the use of hospitals and physicians. Death is viewed as one more phase of the immortal existence of man.

## **Notification of Clergy**

The Church of Christ, Scientist has no clergy or ministers. The Reader or Practitioner may be the officiate of any service of the Church, including a funeral service. However, any member of the Mother Church (the original church in Boston) may also serve as officiate according to Church By-Laws.

## **Removal of Remains**

Due to the members beliefs toward sickness and healing, most deaths of Church of Christ, Scientists will come under the jurisdiction of a Coroner, Medical Examiner, or Justice of the Peace and will take place somewhere other than a medical facility. The circumstances surrounding the death will determine whether or not any restrictions will be placed on the immediate removal of the remains.

## **Preparation of Remains**

Embalming and public viewing are based on individual customs and wishes of the deceased and family. There are no beliefs within the Church to either encourage or discourage member from being embalmed.

## **Dressing and Casketing the Remains**

The clothing to be worn by the deceased and the casket to be used are left up to the individual preferences of the family. Because of its view toward death, and the fact that a church of laymen without clergy to express official opinion, it appears that the individual and family preference determine most activities involved when death occurs.

## **The Funeral Service**

Funerals for members of the Church of Christ, Scientist are similar to those of other protestant denominations, with a few notable exceptions. The funeral service itself may be held anywhere except the Christian Science Church. Most often this would be in the funeral home or the cemetery, either in a chapel or at the actual gravesite. Since the officiate will either be a Practitioner or a Reader, the funeral director should check with that person to determine the order of service.

## **The Committal Service**

The method of disposition is again left up to individual preference. Earth burial, entombment, or cremation are all possible.

# ***THE MENNONITE (AMISH)***

## ***FUNERAL RITE***

### **Introduction**

The Mennonites are a denomination of evangelical protestant Christians who settled in the United States in 1683. There are several major bodies within the Mennonites but all are very similar in views. They have been most widely known for their views on issues such as separation of church and state, refusal to take oaths, refusal to take up arms against others, and protest of slavery.

### **Notification of Clergy**

The clergy consists of Bishops or elders, ministers who are pastors, or evangelists and deacons who take charge of congregations in the absence of the minister or Bishop. The family will determine appropriate timing for notifying clergy.

### **Removal of Remains**

There are no restrictions or requirements for removal of remains.

### **Preparation of Remains**

There are no special requirements for preparation of remains. Embalming is allowed.

### **Dressing and Casketing**

The deceased should be dressed in white underwear and stockings. Males may be dressed in a long gown r white shirt with white trousers and vest. Females will be dressed in a long white gown and cape. In some areas the sons may be responsible for dressing their fathers, and daughters for their mothers.

### **Pre-Service Considerations**

Visitation for friends and neighbors may be held for one or two days prior to the funeral. Visitation and funeral may take place in the home or the church. If held in the church, a procession from the home to the church is traditional. With some groups the procession will use a horse drawn hearse, with the family and friends following in their horse drawn buggies.

## **The Funeral Service**

In some older groups the service may be conducted in German. Some may have men seated on one side of the church or home and women seated on the other. Following the procession to the cemetery, the coffin may be placed in a container or wooden box for burial. After the service, the family and friends will return to the church or home for a meal.

# ***THE ORTHODOX FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction**

The Orthodox Church goes by many titles and names, usually based on locality. An independent council of bishops called a synod governs each church. The term *orthodoxy* means right belief or right worship, hence the claim that the church teaches the *true doctrine* of God and glorifies Him with the *true worship*.

## **Notification of Clergy**

There are no requirements of the church.

## **Removal of Remains**

There are no restrictions or requirements of the church.

## **Preparation of Remains**

There are no restrictions or requirements. A traditional funeral is normal, so embalming is often used.

## **Pre-Service Considerations**

In most cases the rites of a member of the church begin with the Trisagion. It is usually held in the funeral home the evening before the funeral and again the following day immediately before the service. Normally candles will be placed at each end of the casket, a cross behind the casket, and an icon at the foot.

## **The Funeral Service**

A procession brings the casket and family into the church where they are met by the priest. The priest will bless the casket with holy water before the procession moves down the aisle. If the church has a Cantor, he will accompany the priest. The casket is led feet first down the aisle and placed in the Solea with the foot nearest the altar. The casket is usually left open during the service. The service will follow a liturgical order with readings, prayers, and hymns from a special booklet titled the *Parastas* or *Great Panachida*. The final part of the service may include a eulogy.

After the eulogy, the casket is turned so that it is parallel to the Iconostasis and the priest anoints the body with earth and olive oil. In icon is placed at the foot end of the casket and those seated on that side may pass by and kiss the icon. The icon is moved to the other end and the practice repeated for the other side of the church.

## **The Committal Service**

Cremation is considered objectionable in the church so earth burial or entombment is normally used. The Priest will lead in the processional to the burial site. The service will include a litany of readings and prayers by the Priest or Cantor finished with a closing prayer.

# ***THE MORMON FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, founded by Joseph Smith is referred to as Mormon from the title of the Book Of Mormon. The various church bodies of Latter Day Saints do not belong to the protestant churches, but claim their authority directly from God.

## **Notification of Clergy**

Technically speaking there are no professional clergy in Latter Day Saints churches. Once a boy reaches the age of twelve he is ordained in the office of the priesthood. Bishops are called from the priesthood to serve for an unspecified time and without compensation. At the time of death the church does not require notification of the bishop.

## **Removal of Remains**

There are no requirements or restrictions on removal of remains.

## **Dressing and Casketing of Remains**

There are no specific casket requirements. The clothing used is dependent on whether the deceased has been through the temple. For those who have not been through the temple, the family will choose clothing. For a man who has been through the temple, the clothing will consist of white undergarments, socks, shirt, trousers, tie, and moccasins. A robe is worn over the right shoulder extending across the chest in a line to the ankle, front and back. A green apron and white sash are placed across the waist. The sash is tied in a bow on the left side and a white cap is placed on the head. The cap has a bow on the left side and string on the right that is tied to the robe.

For a woman who has been through the temple the clothing is similar except that a white veil is draped on the pillow at the back of the head and placed over the face before the casket is closed. In most cases, church members will come to the funeral home to dress the deceased.

## **Pre-Service Considerations**

Visitation and viewings are usually held the evening before the funeral and may take place at the funeral home, the residence, or tabernacle.

## **The Funeral Service**

The funeral may be held in the funeral home, ward chapel, or the tabernacle, but not in the temple. Simplicity is the key word in Mormon funerals. The use of a cross, crucifix, candles, or other such items is not permitted. The use of flowers may also be discouraged. An example order of service would include:

- Prelude
- Invocation
- Eulogy/Obituary
- Musical Selection
- Speaker
- Postlude

## **The Committal Service**

Earth burial is the customary disposition, but other methods are also permitted.

# ***THE JEWISH FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction to Judaism**

Judaism, thought to date back to, the 16th century B. C. was the first monotheistic religion. Founded by Abraham, Judaism was the foundation for Christianity and Islam. Judaism is based on the doctrine of one God, ancient scriptures (Old Testament) and talmud (oral teachings of the Torah).

There are three religious Jewish groupings in the United States. The Orthodox, who continue the ancient traditions and beliefs, the Reform, who allow greater flexibility and have adapted to modern practices, and the Conservative, who fit somewhere in between the Orthodox, and Reform. They still follow the ancient traditions, but have accepted gradual changes as a natural growth of the religion.

While there are many similar customs, traditions and beliefs of the Orthodox, Reform, and Conservative Jewish, there are also some differences in their practices. The same is true of their funeral customs and practices. The Orthodox, which is the most conservative in their practices will be discussed first, followed by a combined look at the Reform and Conservative which, while not identical, follow many of the same funeral practices. The funeral director should be aware of the various congregations in his or her community and the practices that they follow.

# ***THE ORTHODOX-JEWISH FUNERAL RITE***

## **Notification of the Rabbi**

All services and arrangements are under the direct supervision of the local Rabbi and a funeral director. The Rabbi should be immediately notified unless death occurs on the Sabbath (Saturday) in which case he should be notified immediately after the end of the Sabbath. The group leader of Chevra Kadisha Society should also be notified.

## **Removal of Remains**

No removals are to be made from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday, unless death occurs in a public place and/or if the body interferes with public health. If death was from a violent cause, all blood stained clothing and other material should be removed with the remains and placed in the casket with the remains. This is done in order to return the entire body back to the elements from which it was created.

With the death of an Orthodox Jew the role of the Sacred Society begins when death has been definitely established. Straw is placed on the floor then covered with a sheet. Members of the Chevra kadisha (men handle men and women handle women) carefully undress the remains and carefully position the body on the sheet face up with feet facing the door. The windows in the room are opened.

The deceased is addressed by name in Hebrew and is asked by the participants to forgive any indignity. While the deceased is being positioned, prayers are recited. The limbs are straightened, eyes closed and the mouth and jaw may be tied with a handkerchief or piece of cloth. A block or pillow should be placed under the head. A candle should be lit and placed at the head of the deceased. All mirrors within the household should be covered. If it is not possible to perform the Hashkava at the time of death, it need not be done before the Tahara. Only observant Jews may handle the body. The body should be covered at all times and handled with dignity and respect. The total proceedings are referred to as Laying Down (Hashkava).

There are many variations in accordance to geographical and individual communities. The funeral directors should contact local Rabbis individually in order to determine the preferred customs of that particular community.

From the time of death, until the time of the funeral, a Shomer (watchman) may remain in the room with the body or within visual distance. The Shomer in the presence of the deceased recites Psalms and traditional prayers for the departed. Smoking, eating, and unnecessary conversation are forbidden in the room with the body. Men and women may serve in the capacity of Shomer for any deceased person. While the body is being maintained prior to Tahara or funeralization under refrigeration, the Shomer should be able to see the door of the unit. These proceedings are referred to as The Watch (Shmira).

### **Preparation of Remains**

If civil laws require embalming, the laws supercede the laws and regulations of the synagogue. If the body is embalmed, the blood is placed in containers and placed in the casket along with the body.

Normal preparation of the Orthodox Jewish body begins with the rite of washing the deceased by the Sacred Society (Chevra Kadisha) as directed by rabbinic authority. Prior to the Tabara, the leader may acquire the necessary sundries to complete the task. The Coffin or casket, called an aron, is a plain wooden pegged box without ornaments or lining. The aran contains no metal parts or animal glues. Holes may be bored in the bottom allowing the deceased to be closer to the earth. Prior to dressing (shrouding) the Tachrichim, broken pottery, Israel earth, wooden instruments, pails and pitchers, sheets torn into strips for washing, and a Tallis for men must be on hand. In the event the deceased dies from a communicable disease, those performing the Tahara may wear protective garments and rubber gloves. If the deceased is male the members of the Chevra Kadisha would be men. If female, the Chevra Kadisha would be made up of women.

### **Dressing and Casketing**

It is the responsibility of the Chevra Kadisha to shroud the body. The Tachrichim should be made of white linen without binding, hems, knots or pockets. The Tachrichim for men consists of seven garments:

Mitznefes	a headdress
Michnasayim	trousers with closed feet
K'sones	a shirt with sleeves
Kittel	a robe with collar and sleeves
Avnet, Gartel	a sash
Tallis	a prayer shawl
Sovev	a small linen bag used as a headrest

The Tachrichim for women consists of eight garments including:

Bonnet	covering for the hair
Midmasayim	pants with closed feet
K'sones	a blouse
Kittel	a long robe
Gartel	a sash
Apron	
Face cover	
Sovey	a linen sheet

The linen bag is filled with straw and Israel earth and is put in the casket as a headrest. Israel earth is also spread on the floor of the casket. After the body has been carefully placed in the casket, personal articles may be included. Any clothes or jewelry that was on the body at the time of death should also be placed in the casket. Once this is done, the casket is closed and generally will not be reopened again. The casket is then removed from the area of preparation, feet first to the site of the funeral.

After being in contact with the remains, being in the same room or at the cemetery, one's hands should be washed prior to entering one's residence.

### **Pre-service Considerations**

Most Orthodox Jewish funerals are held in the funeral home or at the cemetery. Very few are held in the synagogue. If the funeral is to be held at the funeral home, the aron is placed parallel to the front of the chapel or stateroom and covered with a pall. A menorah is placed near the casket. Flowers are not normally used in an Orthodox Jewish funeral. However since there may be some individuals who are not familiar with the customs there may be times when flowers will arrive at the funeral home. The funeral director should determine with the family and Rabbi how to handle this issue.

### **The Funeral Service**

The Rabbi determines the order of the service. No funerals may be held on the Sabbath (from sundown Friday until sundown Saturday). A cantor will often accompany the Rabbi and take part in the funeral service, usually chanting or singing the readings. In many areas, the funeral home will provide transportation for both the Rabbi and Cantor.

### **The Funeral Procession**

The cortege (levaya) may stop at the synagogue. If this occurs, the funeral director should escort the Rabbi to the synagogue door. The Rabbi recites a prayer as the funeral director opens the doors of the funeral coach. This provides one last contact of the deceased with the

synagogue. Once the prayer is over, the funeral director should close the door of the funeral coach and escort the Rabbi back to his automobile. The cortege will then proceed to the cemetery.

### **The Committal Service**

During the procession to the grave the Rabbi may stop the casket bearers seven times to pray. Once the casket reaches the grave the casket bearers place the casket on wooden planks or cloth straps over the newly dug grave in the Jewish cemetery or the Jewish section of a cemetery.

The site around the actual grave is usually plain with no artificial grass, mechanical lowering device or sometimes tent.

The Rabbi recites the final prayers and the family and friends recite the Kaddish. The clothing of the family may be cut or torn at this point in the committal service. The casket is then lowered into the ground. The Rabbi reluctantly shovels earth onto the casket and then lays the shovel down to be picked up by members of the family who also shovel dirt onto the casket until the casket is covered.

On leaving the gravesite, the mourners should wash their hands three times by pouring water on them from a vessel, beginning with the right hand. Their hands are then air-dried.

*NOTE: It is important to remember that a number of variations of the orthodox Jewish funeral rite exist. This material should be used only as a guide. Consulting your local rabbinic authority is of the utmost importance.*

### **Laws of Mourning**

Upon the death of a member of the Jewish faith, the blood relatives are to observe certain mourning periods. During these periods the relatives are to humble themselves as a display of respect for the deceased. Although they may rend (tear) their garments either on the day of the death or at the committal site, this custom has generally been replaced with a rending of a symbolic ribbon worn on the clothing. The mourners are expected to refrain from work, festivities or amusement during this time. The mourning periods listed below may apply to the Orthodox, Reform or Conservative Jewish faiths.

*Shivah:* The observance of Shivah begins on the day of the burial and ends on the seventh day after burial.

*Sholoshim:* a thirty-day mourning period during which the mourners abstain from any festivities or amusement following the death of a relative.

*Yahrzeit:* The anniversary date of a death. A yahrzeit candle is burned in the home for a twenty-four period. (Note: For the death of a parent, the mourners will abstain from all festivities for a period of twelve months)

# ***THE CONSERVATIVE AND REFORM JEWISH FUNERAL RITES***

## **Introduction to the Conservative and Reform Judaism**

One should not assume that the Conservative and Reform (Liberal) branches of Judaism are identical because they are combined in this discussion. While they have some similarities based on their origins from the Orthodox Jewish faith, they also have some distinct differences both in beliefs and practice. These differences, especially as they effect the funeral rite, will be pointed 'out during this discussion.

## **Notification of the Death**

It is of utmost importance that the funeral home, upon receiving the first call, request verbal permission to remove the body from the place of death. It is also necessary to inform the family that embalming is not required by law, only desirable due to natural biological changes that may occur after a death. Unlike the Orthodox Jews, removal and preparation of the Conservative and Reform Jew is not prohibited. There may be times however, in which the funeral home staff will encounter members of the two Jewish groupings following the Orthodox practices.

## **Notification of the Clergy**

It is usually not necessary to contact the Rabbi at the time of death unless it is the desire of the family. Prior to completion: of the funeral service arrangements, the Rabbi should be contacted to confirm the time and place of the service.

## **Preparation of the Remains**

Restrictions are usually not placed on embalming a member of the Conservative or Reform Jewish faith. Verbal permission should be obtained at the time of the first call, followed by written permission during the funeral arrangement conference. There will be times in which the Rabbi or the family, whether for religious personal reasons, prefers the body not be embalmed.

## **Dressing and Casketing**

The deceased may be dressed in any clothing desired by the family and Rabbi. There are instances where it is the request of a family that a shroud be used under the regular clothing or in place of the deceased's clothing.

The casket is the choice of the family. There are no restrictions as to the material it is made of or the type. While some followers of the Conservative or Reform Jewish faith may choose the traditional orthodox wooden casket (aron), the casket may be made from wood, metal or any of the other materials normally used casket construction.

### **Pre-Funeral Service Considerations**

As has already been seen in other areas of comparison, there are more options available in the area of funeral service considerations in both the Conservative and Reform Jewish funerals. Casket placement in the funeral home, either in a visitation area or in the chapel would follow the customary placement of all caskets. Determination as to whether the casket is to be open or closed during this time will be determined by the family in conjunction with their Rabbi.

A Star of David may be placed within the bead panel, behind the casket, or on top of the casket. The placing of a candle near the casket is also optional. Flowers are also optional in accordance to local customs or the family's instructions.

### **The Funeral Service**

One similarity between the Orthodox and the Conservative and Reform Jewish religions is their desire to not hold funerals on their Sabbath (Saturday). However the Conservative and Reform Jewish funerals may be held in the funeral home, the residence of the deceased, the temple or at the gravesite. The Rabbi, often accompanied by a Cantor, will lead the service.

If the funeral service takes place somewhere other than the temple, the cortege will not normally stop at the temple on the way to the cemetery.

### **The Committal Service**

Burial may take place in any cemetery of the family's choosing. The use of artificial grass, a tent and mechanical lowering device are also permitted. During the committal service, the Rabbi will say special prayers and lead the mourners in the recitation of the Kaddish.

# ***THE BUDDHIST FUNERAL RITE***

## **Introduction to the Triadic Religion Concept**

In Eastern Asia, religion is understood as TAO. Here, religion means devotion to religious observances, a personal set of religious attitudes, and practices or principles of beliefs held to with ardor. The TAO is a process of nature by which all things change and is to be followed by a life of harmony. It also means art and skills of doing something in harmony with the nature of this thing.

## **Three Main Religions in the Orient**

### **Buddhism**

The teaching of Guatama Buddha is that suffering is inherent in life and that one can be liberated from it by mental and moral self-purification. The place of worship is called Pagoda.

### **Confucianism**

The teaching of Confucius is related to the path of virtuous conduct, moral and ethical principles which regulate individuals and society. The place of worship is the temple.

### **Taoism**

Taoism is a mystical philosophy, founded by Laotzu, teaching the conformity to the TAO by unassertive action and simplicity. The place of worship is a temple.

The funeral rite derives from the principles and practices of the union of these three religions. As an example, the Deceased Altar is related to Confucianism; the Buddha altar is related to Buddhism; and the Burning of Paper Joss things or votive money is related to Taoism.

## **Notification of the Pagoda**

The family notifies the Pagoda and the Bonze (Buddhist priest) of their preference concerning the funeral and disposition. There is no regulation regarding when this is to take place.

## **Removal and Preparation of Remains**

Removal and preparation of the deceased is left entirely up to the family. Rice, gold, or coins may be placed inside the mouth before the funeral.

### **Dressing and Casketing the Remains**

For the Ceremony of the Declaration of Death, all of the family members wear white clothes including hoods or turbans made of white gauze, cry loudly and burst into tears, lament while waiting for the arrival of Bonze. At this time the body is prepared, dressed (no special requirements) and placed on a table next to the casket. When the Bonze arrives, he begins the Service of Encasketing with prayers and benediction. After consulting his “Book of Dates” to have the auspicious or favorable time according to the date of birth and date of death, along with the surviving spouse or son’s birthdates, he then decides the accurate time to put the body into the casket.

### **Watch (Wake) Service and Visitations**

Two tables may be set up as altars. The deceased altar is placed before the casket with the deceased photos, candles, oil lamp, and incense vase, flowers, fruits, and food (a boiled egg is put on top of a bowl of rice). This observance is related to the Confucian cult of the death (ancestors). The “Buddha Altar” is usually placed at the right angle of the “Deceased Altar” and contains incense, candles, and fruits. The Watch Service begins with the Bonze striking wooden bells and saying a prayer. There may be several services between which visitation and viewings are held.

### **Burial Procession and Committal Service**

At the time prescribed by the Bonze, the procession moves from the funeral home to the cemetery. At the graveside Bonze says a prayer and gives final benediction with holy water and incense. A eulogy may be given for the deceased. Cremation is encouraged with the committal service being held before the cremation at the funeral home.

### **Post-Burial Services**

Post burial services are held at the home or the Pagoda once per week for seven weeks. These services help the deceased soul to pass and go through the best reincarnation.

### **Mourning Period**

The mourning period may last from 6 months to three years depending on relationship to the deceased. Mourners are expected to refrain from festivities and amusement, they may wear a black ribbon or band when working.

# ***THE JAPANESE BUDDHIST DEATH RITUAL***

## **Introduction**

The Japanese Buddhists differ in custom and traditions from the Indian, Chinese, and Korean Buddhists. Historically all Buddhism is derived from India, but each country and culture has its own unique translation of the original teachings of the Buddha. The Jodo Shinshu sect has set the standard for the death ritual that all others adhere to closely.

## **Beliefs**

Buddhists believe the world is an imperfect place full of suffering and sorrow. The only way to end the suffering is to be released from all physical constraints and become enlightened. All sects pay homage to the Buddha, a mortal being who became enlightened while still on earth. They believe that the soul joins and becomes a Buddha in Nirvhana, the Pure Land. There is no heaven or hell, just Nirvhana. Everyone will become enlightened when they die, and exist forever in Eternal Bliss.

## **Before Death**

There are no sacraments or prayer given to someone who is dying.

## **Notification of Minister**

The minister may be notified at death on the wishes of the family.

## **Removal of Remains**

Traditionally the makura-gyo, or bedside prayer, is to be performed by the minister before the body is moved. The prayer may also be done at the funeral home before the funeral arrangements are made.

## **Funeral Arrangements**

Upon completion of the Makuru-gyo, the minister will usually join the family for planning the funeral. All Buddhist churches require flowers and Japanese confectionery to be placed on the altar for the funeral, the exact nature of such to be determined by the preference of the minister. Visitations are usually scheduled before the funeral.

## **Dressing and Casketing Remains**

There are no specific guidelines for casket or clothing for laymen. Ministers and prominent church members are to be dressed in their vestments indicative of their position in the church.

## **The Funeral Service**

There are no requirements for time and place, though most are scheduled at night so relatives and friends do not have to take time from work. The casket is placed parallel to the altar and remains open for the entire service, unless specified by the family. The order of service is as follows:

*Tolling of the temple bell*

*Procession*

Minister

Casket Bearers

Funeral Director

Casket (head first)

Funeral Director

*Chanting of sutras before the casket by officiate*

*Presentation of Buddhist name:* a posthumous name is conferred upon the deceased by the minister, signifying that he has begun his new existence in the Nirvhana.

*Offering of incense:* Before the altar will be several incense burners. This is the most significant expression in the Buddhist religion, always followed by a quick recitation of a verse. The burning of the incense represents the spiritual cleansing of the soul and the transference of one's mortality to Nirvhana.

*Gatha:* The first two verses of a Buddhist hymn will be sung

*Opening remarks by the chairman*

*Eulogy*

*Sermon*

*Gatha:* The last two verses of a hymn sung

*Condolence Message:* read to the family on behalf of the congregation

*Words of Appreciation:* By a representative of the family in response to the condolences

*Recessional*

## **Final Disposition**

There are no restrictions or requirements in regards to disposition. If burial is chosen a graveside service will be held with the minister present. If cremation is chosen there will be a cremation service either in the chapel or the mortuary with the minister present. After the services the family will return to the temple for a final service to provide closure for family members.

## **Memorial Services**

Memorial services are held periodically to ensure the deceased safe passage to Nirvana. More practically, these services give mourners a chance to join in fellowship and support through the grieving period. Services are usually held on 7<sup>th</sup> and 49<sup>th</sup> day after death, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of death, and every 50<sup>th</sup> year thereafter.

# **FIRE FAMILIES**

## **Family Support & Awareness Program**

**By Chaplain Cameron Brown**

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## **Objectives of Family Support Training**

- To provide significant others with an understanding of the personality traits of the emergency worker.
- To identify all aspects of emergency work that produce stress.
- To assist significant others in recognition of signs and symptoms of distress.
- To identify the impact of emergency service careers on family members.
- To provide survival tactics for emergency providers and their families.
- To provide ongoing education on communication techniques.

## **Important Factors in Training**

1. **Ice Breakers.** These only take a few minutes but are fun and help to refresh the mind during the long hours of training.
2. **Mix Teaching Methods.** Present lessons in a variety of ways so that information is reinforced and integrated.
3. **Role Model.** While teaching, the instructor should be modeling the behaviors and concepts that are being taught.
4. **Student Involvement.** Use a variety of techniques that get participants involved as much as possible.
5. **Include Everyone.** Call people by name and try to get each person recognized in other ways. Additionally, this concept helps build confidence.

# ***LESSON I: EMERGENCY SERVICE STRESSORS AND PERSONALITY TRAITS***

**GOAL:** To heighten the participants' awareness of emergency service stressors and personality traits unique to the fire service.

**OBJECTIVE:** Given information on types of stressors, participants will identify and give examples of environmental, psychosocial, and personality stressors associated with emergency work.

Following this exercise, the participants will describe the personality traits of emergency workers.

**PURPOSE:** Educating emergency workers and their significant others increase their awareness of emergency work stressors. Also, personality traits can contribute to one's desire to be an emergency worker and to one's commitment and dedication to their career and family.

**PRESENTATION:** Participants are requested to refer to their handouts on emergency services stressors. The instructor gives a summary of the stressors and requests feedback on the ways in which these stressors can influence emergency workers and their families.

After completing this introduction, the participants are requested to place their chairs in a circle formation. Each person is given a handout on personality traits and requested to refer to this handout during the following exercise: Each participant chooses a balloon, blows up the balloon, and then bursts the balloon to get out the small piece of paper. The instructor asks each individual to read and complete the statement written on the paper. The group identifies personality traits that the individual describes. The instructor lists the traits on a flipchart or board.

After everyone has had an opportunity to complete their statements, the instructor summarizes personality traits and how these characteristics affect the emergency worker and family. Finally, the instructor requests comments and questions from the participants.

**METHODS:** Discussion, group activity

**MATERIALS:** Handouts on Emergency Stressors  
Balloons with questions  
Handouts on Personality Traits  
Flipchart of Board  
Markers

## **Emergency Services Stressors**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL**

- External situations that pertain to nature or conditions in the surrounding environment.
- Noise
- Confined space
- Weather conditions
- Pressures of rapid response
- Rapid decision-making
- Citizens observing incident

### **PSYCHOSOCIAL**

- Psychosocial stressors are anything to do with contact with nuclear or extended family and work relationships.

#### **Family Stressors**

- Shift work
- Financial pressures
- Lack of quality time
- Marital conflicts
- Raising children
- Household responsibilities

#### **Job Stressors**

- Conflicts with administration
- Abusive patients
- Media at the scene
- Restrictions on scope of practice
- Unpredictable changes
- Dangerous situations
- Lack of appreciation and recognition by superiors

## **PERSONALITY TRAITS OF EMERGENCY WORKERS**

### **1. Perfectionist**

Obsessive/compulsive

Low tolerance for incompetence

High expectations of success

Second-guessing, brood over mistakes

Idealistic

Hard workers

### **2. Control Oriented**

Use, need control

May be rigid, inflexible

Use terminology of control

Control of others, situations, and self

Can lead to frustration

### **3. Low Emotional Expression**

Sit on their emotions - part of the control

Tool and task-oriented

Talk in terms of situational problems, i.e. number of runs, lack of recognition, and lack of resources

**4. Other Characteristics**

Dedicated

Hardworking

Duty to family

Help giver

Loyal

Honest, trustworthy

Highly responsible

Action oriented

Risk takers

***PERSONALITY TRAITS***

***Questions for Balloon Activity***

1. When I make a mistake on the job, I...
2. When someone makes a mistake on the job I...
3. I worry about...
4. I know I overload or take on too much responsibility because...
5. Sometimes I feel I should have done better even though I know there was no way I could have done so. An example is...
6. The rules at my house are...
7. I often tell family members what to do because...
8. Ways I demonstrate self-control are...
9. I do not like change because...
10. I like to know what to expect because...
11. I get frustrated because...
12. I do not like to show emotions because...
13. I hide my emotions by...
14. When I get upset/sad I...
15. Family members describe my personality as...
16. I tolerate a lot at the station because...
17. I am most dedicated to...
18. The most important thing about my job is...
19. The profession I would rather be in is...
20. It is important to help others because...
21. People can count on me because...

## ***LESSON II: CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS***

**GOAL:** To strengthen the participants' awareness of critical incident stress and to observe how the debriefing process empowers individuals to normalize their reactions to a critical incident.

**OBJECTIVE:** Given information on the definition of a critical incident, participants will identify specific conditions that require debriefings.

Given information on physical, cognitive, and emotional reactions, individuals will discuss how to minimize these transitory symptoms.

**PURPOSE:** Critical incidents commonly result from situations in which there is an imminent threat to life. The threat may be to the emergency workers or to the citizens. Educating the emergency workers and their families about critical incident stress and the debriefing process will mitigate the degree of anxiety often associated with talking about particular situations. Family members will have a better understanding of the emergency worker's behaviors and emotional pain. Participants will learn coping strategies and general guidelines for healthy living.

**PRESENTATION:** Participants are requested to refer to their critical incident stress handouts as the instructor defines critical incidents. The instructor asks the participants to list examples of critical incidents on a blank sheet of paper. Class discussion follows with a focus on what made each of the incidents a traumatic experience and how did the emergency worker react. Partners are questioned about their observations of behaviors that followed critical incidents.

On completing this introduction, the emergency workers participate in a mock debriefing. The emergency workers are seated in an inner circle while the partners are seated in an outer circle. The instructor facilitates the debriefing with the assistance of peer debriefers.

After completing the debriefing, the emergency workers are asked about their thoughts and reactions to the group process. After summarizing the emergency workers' responses, the partners are given

an opportunity to discuss their observations. The instructor summarizes the debriefing process, reactions, and coping strategies.

**METHODS:** Lecture, discussion, and role-play

**MATERIALS:** Handouts on Critical Incident Stress  
Index cards with scenarios stating specific roles for emergency workers  
Index cards for partners to list the emergency workers' behaviors and attitudes during the debriefing.  
Flipchart to list examples of critical incidents

## **CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS**

Critical incidents are incidents of extraordinary magnitude that possibly introduce exceptional physical and emotional turmoil. Typically, this would be a disaster caused by fire, airplane crash, building collapse, multiple fatalities, explosion, toxic contamination, death or injury of a co-worker, and the death or injury of children. Incidents involving children produce many profound effects. Incidents where co-workers are injured or killed may be the hardest of all for emergency responders.

## **REACTIONS CAUSED BY CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

No two people react to disaster in the same way, but several patterns of behavior have been studied following critical incidents. Given the chaos or horror of a disaster, stress reaction stems from the resulting emotional pain. Emotional pain is as real as physical pain, and feeling this hurt is part of the recovery process. These responses are a normal reaction to an abnormal circumstance. Stress-related symptoms are transitory; long-term detrimental effects are relatively rare.

### **PHYSICAL REACTIONS**

- Fatigue
- Nightmares
- Hyperactivity
- Insomnia (which may turn to hypersomnia)
- Underactivity
- Health problems (like digestive problems)
- Exhaustion
- Startle reactions

### **COGNITIVE REACTIONS**

- Difficulty with concentration
- Difficulty solving problems
- Flashbacks
- Isolation
- Inability to attach importance to anything else
- Memory disturbances

### **EMOTIONAL REACTIONS**

Fear/Anxiety

Anger (which may be manifested in scape- goading, irritability, frustration with the “system,” or violent fantasies)

Guilt

Emotional numbing

Over-sensitivity

Depression

Feeling of helplessness

Amnesia for the event

## **COPING WITH CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS**

- Within the first 24-48 hours – Periods of strenuous physical exercise alternated with relaxation will alleviate some of the physical reactions.
- Structure your time – Keep busy.
- You’re normal and having normal reactions – Don’t label yourself crazy or weak.
- Talk to people – Talk is the most healing medicine.
- Be aware of numbing the pain with overuse of drugs or alcohol – You don’t need to complicate this with a substance problem.
- Reach out – People do care.
- Keep your lives as normal as possible.
- Spend time with others.
- Help your co-workers as much as possible by sharing feelings and checking out how they are doing.
- Give yourself permission to feel rotten and share your feelings with others.
- Remember – You can stand your feelings and the intensity of the hurt will lessen.
- Keep a journal – Write your way through those sleepless hours.
- Do things that feel good to you.

- Realize those around you are also under stress.
- Don't make any big life changes.
- Do make as many daily decisions as possible, which will give you a feeling of control over your life, i.e., if others ask you what you want to eat – answer them even if you are not sure.

**Special recognition and thanks to the City of Los Angeles Department of Fire from whose program this material was excerpted.**

## **INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES ABOUT CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS**

### **WHAT IS A CRITICAL INCIDENT?**

Critical incidents commonly result from situations in which there is an imminent threat to life, either for the emergency worker or for the people they are duty bound to serve. These are incidents of extraordinary magnitude that possibly introduce exceptional physical and emotional turmoil. The department identifies certain incidents that may produce unusual duress. Typically, this would be a disaster caused by fire, airplane crash, building collapse, multiple fatalities, explosion, toxic contamination, death or injury of a co-worker, and the death or injury of children.

Incidents involving children often produce emotional, physical, and cognitive reactions. Incidents where co-workers are injured or killed may be the hardest of all for emergency responders.

### **WHAT REACTIONS DOES A CRITICAL INCIDENT PRODUCE?**

No two people react to disaster in the same way, but several patterns of behavior have been studied following critical incidents. Given the chaos or horror of a disaster, stress reaction stems from the resulting emotional pain. Emotional pain is as real as physical pain, and feeling this hurt is part of the recovery process.

Keep in mind two things: (1) any reactions are normal and (2) stress-related symptoms are transitory, and long-term detrimental effects are relatively rare.

Following is a list of some reactions to Critical Incident Stress:

- Anger – Both specifically about the incident and about life in general. There could be more than usual irritability at home and at work. However, if domestic violence results, this is not to be tolerated and needs immediate intervention.
- 
- Generally feeling depressed – A sense of loss; feelings of helplessness; crying for “no reason.”
- 
- Guilt – Because unable to save more lives in spite of their sophisticated skills, training, and their desire to rescue.
- 
- Sleep disturbances – Insomnia, nightmares, increased sleep time, lethargy, constant fatigue, restlessness, waking early, and sleep that is not giving them a feeling of rest. In fact, sleep disturbance is the one reaction that is most often reported following a critical incident.
- 
- Brief flashbacks – A reliving of some aspects of the incident, frequently triggered by smells, sounds, tastes, and emotions. This worries emergency workers; they often wonder about having complete control of their thoughts.
- 
- Mild confusion – Difficulty concentrating and attending to details, amnesia about parts of the incident, hearing, and speech difficulties.
- 
- Increased startle response – Ever vigilant to the incident possibly occurring again, jumpy, senses may be acutely tuned to protect. This could include well-intentioned restrictions being imposed on loved ones to keep them safe.
- 
- Physical changes – Nausea, diarrhea, loss or increase of appetite, muscle tremors, headaches, back and neck aches, indigestion, cold and flu symptoms, increased alcohol and tobacco use.
- 
- Denial – Emergency workers may not always be aware of being affected by a critical incident. Some actually report and show no impact at all, this time. You might be more sensitive to a reaction than he/she is. Everyone clings to the concept of

invulnerability, that “the next person needs the help.” You can see where this belief could be especially strong for rescuers. A variation of denial is to talk all about the other calls while saying that this one was really nothing. Regardless of the circumstances you find, trust your instincts and encourage talk.

- Other manifestations – Lack of coordination, accident prone, and anxiety about returning to work, mood swings, and job dissatisfaction.

You know him/her better than anyone. If you see a marked change suddenly appear, it is a clue that a critical incident stress reaction may have occurred. But keep in mind; these symptoms are a normal early response.

I can often tell when something unusual has happened. My loved one seems distant, withdrawn, and isolated. Is this normal? What can I do?

Nationally, nearly 60% of emergency personnel report that critical incidents impact their family life through arguments or withdrawal. It is suspected that this impact is probably closer to 100%. The gate between home and work swings both ways, and it just swung to your side.

Specialists in the field of critical incident psychology closely examine the phenomenon of isolation. A growing sense of is a common emotional sign of a delayed stress reaction. Sometimes these feelings of aloneness develop because of the responder’s self-doubt after a tough call.

Emergency workers are great for picking apart every action or decision and brutally putting themselves down for every possible mistake. Unfortunately, the gift of analysis may bring the curse of anger and rage. This irritability results in keeping people at a distance; therefore, if possible, family members should limit demands placed on the distressed rescue worker.

Isolation may be occurring at more levels than you see.

- There may be feelings of estrangement from colleagues who were not part of the incident – “they can’t understand what it was like.”
- Colleagues not part of the assignment may feel resentment at not getting into the incident while being left behind with the comparable drudgery of business as usual and an extra workload.
- Another consideration is that your loved one went through something without the family. The feeling may be that since you were not there, maybe you too cannot understand.
- There may be conflict and isolation with family members who are angry at the rescuer’s absence during the disaster. Especially if overtime or recall is involved. Sleep may now seem more important than family plans. Promises may be broken and routine work may pile up.
- And more subtly, your loved one may shift between a need to ventilate and an unwillingness to talk at all. The vacillation could be completely out of sync with the wishes and readiness of the family.

Jeffery T. Mitchell, Ph.D., a noted trauma recovery specialist, finds that distressed workers tend to avoid contact with the people that love them most, and who might provide the best support. Don’t be surprised if they refuse to discuss anything for a while. This is not just happening in your home; it’s happening in many homes after the incident. It has nothing to do with anything you did. Don’t blame yourself for his/her reaction.

One way to solve the isolation dilemma would be to have the emergency worker take a step back for a moment and see what is happening. But remember how powerful denial worked? Realizing that he/she may be experiencing a delayed reaction gets your loved one on a new track, one using trusted friends and open communications. Good friends, family, clergy, and counselors may all be very helpful in restoring the balance of a distressed worker’s life by providing support and feedback.

A discussion of family communications would be incomplete without addressing the issue of sex. Occasionally, emergency workers experience a diminished sexual drive, or a decreased ability to perform sexually as a result of delayed stress reactions. They may also become more resistive to touching or being touched during a delayed stress reaction. Conversely, some may desire more affection. Sexuality could be an important love and life affirming statement. If decreased sexual intimacy is related to delayed stress, it is often transitory.

Let us conclude this topic with an observation and reaffirmation of your importance. Strong relationships with family, friends, and co-workers buffer distress and have a positive affect on both physical and mental health. Because of the many stresses and hazards inherent in their work, developing and maintaining good social support networks are very important for emergency workers.

## ***LESSON III: GENDER DIFFERENCES IN COMMUNICATION***

**GOAL:** To heighten the participants' awareness of the differences in the ways some males and females communicate.

**OBJECTIVES:** Given information on the female and male rules of communication participants will list the rules of communication and apply them in role-plays.

**PURPOSE:** For a couple to have effective communication, each must have the necessary knowledge and skills. For a relationship to be successful, men and women should be aware of their differences and learn ways in which they can handle these in a constructive and comprehensible fashion.

**PRESENTATION:** Participants are requested to refer to their rules of communication handouts as the instructor lectures on the material. The instructor summarizes the rules and asks the participants how they can acknowledge this information and apply this to their daily lives.

After completion of the introduction, participants are assigned a scenario and will participate as a couple. After each scenario the group will discuss: the differences in communication; how the rules are applied; and how others might handle the situation differently.

After every couple has had an opportunity to complete their role-play, the instructor will summarize and ask participants what rules of communication are most valuable and applicable, both personally and as a couple.

**METHODS:** Discussion role-plays

**MATERIALS:** Handouts on Female and Male Rules of Communication, index cards with scenarios stating specific roles for each person, overhead projector and overhead of Rules of Communication

**FEMALE RULES OF COMMUNICATION**

1. Asking a question is a good way to show someone that you are interested in him or her.
2. Talking about problems can be a relief; and sharing complaints is a way to be close and supportive.
3. Background details help someone understand a situation.
4. Discussing problems show that the person is important, even if the problem is not.
5. People feel comfortable expressing opinions only when you ask them what they think.
6. Acknowledging that someone is in a bad situation is a way to express sympathy and be supportive.
7. Complaining that a relationship falls short of a romantic ideal is a way to let both partners share their disappointments and get closer.

**MALE RULES OF COMMUNICATION**

1. Ask a question only when you want information.
2. Do not dwell on the negative. Complaining never helped anyone.
3. Get to the point; details are boring and often irrelevant.
4. There is no point in discussing a trivial problem; just make a decision and be done with it.
5. Say what you want directly. If you don't, that's your problem.
6. Pointing out that someone is in a bad situation is a form of putdown through pity.
7. Being unrealistic about relationships is a mistake, as is complaining about and blaming others for things that cannot be changed

**Special recognition and thanks to Gary Smalley from whose program this material was excerpted.**

## ***LESSON IV: COMMUNICATION: THE FOUNDATION OF HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS***

**GOAL:** Couples will develop a greater understanding on nonverbal communication techniques and will feel more comfortable using these in their relationship.

**OBJECTIVE:** Following lecture and group activity, participants will list the Primary Methods of Body Language and describe the importance of each.

**PURPOSE:** Body language is more open to interpretation than oral language. Individuals often draw conclusions about others based upon perception of body language. Knowledge of body language will mitigate some misunderstanding and misinterpretation commonly inherent in familial relationships.

**PRESENTATION:** The basis of this lesson is the use of the audience's experience with active listening and interpretation of body language.

The instructor gives each participant a copy of various nonverbal behaviors (see list). The audience divides into couples and has ten minutes to talk with each other about a recent concern in their relationship.

They are to make note of the body language used during the conversation. After the allotted period, the group reconvenes and the instructor facilitates group discussion. Discussion will focus on the couple's interpretation of the body language used during the exercise. A lecture and discussion on the methods of nonverbal communication and the role interpretation will conclude this presentation.

**METHOD:** Lecture, discussion, question and answer

**MATERIALS:** Handouts on Nonverbal Behavior  
Handout on Primary Methods of Body Language  
Handout on Active Listening to Body Language

## **NONVERBAL BEHAVIOR**

**With your partner, discuss a recent concern in your relationship and pay close attention to the following nonverbal behaviors.**

1. Proximity to each other
2. Eye contact and Movement
3. Stance and Posture
4. Facial Expressions
5. Head Nodding
6. Position of Chin
7. Touch
8. Gestures
9. Body Lean

## **PRIMARY METHODS OF BODY LANGUAGE**

### **EYE CONTACT**

Eye contact is important because it provides us with feedback to the speaker. Eye contact informs the sender if the receiver is actively listening to the conversation.

### **FACIAL EXPRESSIONS**

Facial expressions are used in combination with speech to frame what is being said; thus, demonstrating humor, seriousness, empathy, etc....

### **HEAD NODS**

Head nods inform the speaker that one is listening. The nonverbal behavior encourages the continuation of conversation. Head position can be used to indicate attitudes and as a way of signaling for someone to come or to pay attention.

### **GESTURES AND BODY MOVEMENTS**

Gestures are made with the hands, feet, and body. The hands make the most expressive body gestures. Gestures are often substituted for words and can signal a change in someone's speaking or listening role.

### **POSTURE AND STANCE**

Posture and stance convey attitudes such as friendliness, anger, frustration, hostility, acceptance, and suspicion. One's posture can show if they are interested, relaxed, anxious, and if they are open or closed to the discussion.

### **PROXIMITY**

Closeness or distance communicates how well an individual knows the person they are standing near. Changes in proximity can express the desire to initiate or terminate a discussion.

## **PRIMARY METHODS OF BODY LANGUAGE (cont.)**

### **BODY CONTACT**

Touch is most common in greetings and farewells. Some people are comfortable with being touched while others are not.

### **APPEARANCE**

Appearance and physique are important factors in expressing information. Aspects like body build, height, attractiveness, can all be misinterpreted as a part of self-presentation. Appearance plays a part in the first impressions we have of others.

## **ACTIVE LISTENING TO BODY LANGUAGE**

1. How close were you standing/sitting to your partner?
2. Did the two of you make eye contact? When was there a shift in eye movement?
3. What posture did you assume during the conversation? Was your partner's posture open, closed, attentive?
4. Were your partner's gestures positive or negative? What is the reason for your conclusion?
5. Did your partner lean upright, forward, or backward during the conversation? When was there a shift in body position?
6. Were your partner's facial expressions supportive and did they display interest or disinterest? Give examples.

# ***LESSON V: COMMUNICATION: SELF CONCEPT AND EXPRESSION OF FEELINGS***

**GOAL:** Participants will develop a greater understanding of the clear components of clear interpersonal communication and develop an appreciation of how others express thoughts and feelings.

**OBJECTIVE:** Given information on interpersonal communication, participants will identify and describe the components of effective communication.

Following the exercise, participants will have a greater awareness of self-concept and how this concept influences communication.

The instructor will have an awareness of each individual's self-concept and greater insight of how the individuals in the group express themselves.

**PURPOSE:** How people see themselves is the most important factor affecting communication. If one has a strong self-concept they are more willing to express their feelings, listen objectively, and accept constructive criticism. Knowledge of communication skills and self-awareness can enhance relationships, therefore, reducing distress.

**PRESENTATION:** Participants are asked to refer to their handout on effective communication. The instructor gives a brief summary of effective communication.

The instructor passes out multiple colored candies to the audience. The instructor requests that the audience not eat the candies until after the exercise. Questions are asked that correspond to the color of the candy that each participant chose (see list).

After each person has had an opportunity to discuss their self-concept, the instructor summarizes self-concept and how this affects self-expression.

**METHOD:** Discussion, Question and Answer

**MATERIALS:** Handouts on Effective Communication  
Multiple-colored candy such as Skittles

## **COMPONENTS OF EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION**

### **SELF-CONCEPT**

The most important people in our lives create self-concept.

- \* Parents, caretakers, and other family members
- \* Teachers
- \* Friends, Peers, and Coworkers
- \* Supervisors

Individuals with strong concepts will:

- \* Express his/her feelings
- \* Accept constructive criticism
- \* Listens to others with an open mind

Individuals with weak self-concept will:

- \* Feel insecure when interacting with others
- \* Be guarded in communication
- \* Lack confidence when dealing with others
- \* Guard against self-disclosure

## **CLARITY OF EXPRESSION**

- \* Organize your thoughts and then your words.
- \* Simplify both words and ideas.
- \* Repeat key concepts.
- \* Focus on vital aspects of the message.

## **ANGER MANAGEMENT**

- \* Anger is a normal emotion and is neither good nor bad.
- \* Anger is often the result of a neutral external event perceived as threatening.
- \* Take responsibility for what you say and do.
- \* It is okay to be angry.
- \* Is anger appropriate to the situation?
- \* Talk about your anger with someone.
- \* Learn to re-channel the anger into something positive.
- \* Anger must be released; if repressed, anger can breed physical, emotional, and psychological stress reactions.

## **MANAGING OTHER'S ANGER**

- \* Allow ventilation of the anger.
- \* Give and request feedback.
- \* Keep calm and keep facial expressions sincere.
- \* Validate people's feelings of anger.
- \* Maintain composed demeanor.

## **SELF-DISCLOSURE**

- \* The ability to talk openly and truthfully about oneself.
- \* Important for building relationships.
- \* Judiciously builds trust.

**Special recognition to Mike Montoya from whose handout this material was excerpted.**

## ***LESSON VI: HELPING FAMILIES SURVIVE: SPOUSES/SIGNIFICANT OTHERS***

**GOAL:** To reduce stress in emergency workers by improving family relationships (i.e. communication, understanding each other).

To incorporate spouses/significant others into the CISM network.

**OBJECTIVES:** Participants will be able to identify a minimum of seven characteristics of the rescue worker that create stress for the spouse/significant other.

Participants will describe the similarities and differences in a debriefing for rescue workers and one that includes spouses/significant others.

**PURPOSE:** Today's greater openness about trauma, emotional problems, family breakdown, substance abuse, etc. has brought about recognition of the adverse effects of exceptionally stressful work

situations for both marriage partners. For instance, stress experienced at the workplace can be manifested or exacerbated in the familial setting. Unless the family has developed healthy mechanisms to identify and solve these problems, discord may occur in one or both environments. The purpose of this lesson is to teach people about stresses commonly inherent in emergency services' families. Stress recognition often occurs as emergency workers are debriefed. Inclusion of significant others in the debriefing process has proven to be helpful. I would suggest a separate debriefing for significant others. Finally, in presenting this information, the goal is for chaplains to use this information to improve the quality of life for themselves and the emergency workers.

**PRESENTATION:** If possible, the instructor should get volunteers for this lesson prior to the training. The volunteers should include 4-5 rescue workers and their significant others. (A video of couples filmed for this lesson can be used if volunteers are not available.)

The lesson is presented in the form of the old TV program "The Newlywed Game." Two other volunteers may be selected from the audience to be an announcer and present commercial breaks.

Commercial breaks are presented when spouses leave the room. (The announcer is also used to keep the scores for the couples during the game.)

The room is set up with chairs for each couple at the front of the room. After the program is announced, the instructor acts as the game show host. The couples are introduced and asked questions such as the length of their marriage, number of children, how they met, favorite vacation, etc. The spouses are then taken to a waiting area while the emergency workers are asked how they believe their spouses will respond to specific questions. (See list of questions and their point values.)

Records of the answers are kept. Spouses are returned and asked the same questions. Points are given for a match in answers. The couple with the most points receives the major prize. (The prize can be a gift certificate to a local restaurant.) Others are given a small gift in appreciation for their participation.

Following the awarding of the prizes, the audience is asked to list the stressors and characteristics of rescue worker marriages that were mentioned in the game. The instructor adds any that are left out. (See Lesson III handout.)

The instructor ends this lesson with a brief lecture on how to facilitate a debriefing when spouses or significant others are present. The following points are to be included:

1. Decision-making. How to decide on including spouses in the debriefing with the rescue workers or having a separate group for the spouses.
2. Needs of the spouses/significant others in a debriefing.

**METHOD:** Role-play, Discussion, Lecture

**MATERIALS:** List of questions for “Married to a Rescue Worker” game. First place prize (gift certificate to local restaurant). Gifts for 3-4 other couples. Lesson III handout on issues spouses deal with.

### **MARRIED TO A “RESCUE WORKER” GAME**

#### 1. Introduction of couples

Length of marriage?  
Number of children?  
How did you meet?  
Favorite vacation?

#### 2. Wives wait outside

##### **QUESTIONS:**

10 Points:

1. What will your wife say that you have done that she is most proud of?
2. What will your wife say is the way you most often show your stress?

20 Points:

3. What will your wife say is the thing that she dislikes most about your job?

4. What will your wife say is the thing the two of you argue about the most?

Bonus 30 Points:

5. What would your wife say is the employment (or job) she would prefer you to have?

3. Wives come in and answer same questions.

4. Awarding of prizes.

#### DISCUSSION:

What things worry you about your husband's job?

What do you discuss in regard to the job?

Are there times that you don't want to hear what has gone on?

What would help you cope with your husband's profession?

What impact does your husband's job have on your children?

## **Lesson VI: Handout**

Issues that spouses/significant others deal with when married to a rescue worker.

1. Safety of the rescue worker
2. Constant uncertainty
3. Jealousy over close relationship with peers
4. Coping mechanisms of rescue worker (shutting down, substance abuse, and irritable mood)
5. Being alone a lot
6. Rescue worker's relationship with children
7. Increased responsibility on managing the home
8. Discipline problems with children
9. Media and negative accusations or reporting about the department
10. Risking life for people who do not care (lack of appreciation and recognition)
11. Extremes in attitude toward the public

## ***LESSON VII: HELPING FAMILIES SURVIVE: CHILDREN***

**GOAL:** To enable emergency workers to feel confident about working with children at the scene of a critical incident, at a formal debriefing, and within their own family relationships.

To inform significant others of the stress associated with working with children.

**OBJECTIVES:** After reading the articles on children's response to trauma, the participants will be able to list a minimum of 5 typical responses of children in each age group.

After reading the articles on children's response to trauma, participants will be able to describe 5 techniques of intervening with a child.

Given the lesson on children of rescue workers, participants will list 3 major concerns of these children and will describe a possible solution for each concern.

**PURPOSE:** In some situations, children are more resilient to trauma than adults are. Other situations can lead to long-lasting changes in the child or a difficult recovery. As with adults, there are many factors that are related to the child's recovery. This lesson will look at the developmental level of the child and the interaction with rescue workers as factors in a child's recovery.

When children are victims of critical incidents, the emergency worker's stress is often compounded by the rescue worker's relationship with his/her own children. Therefore, the quality of the work life and family life of a rescue worker is improved when there is an improved ability to understand and work with children.

**PRESENTATION:** The lesson is begun by asking participants to write their profession at the top of a piece of paper (but no name). They are then to write 3 answers to each of the following: 1) feelings

they have when children get hurt; 2) worries they have about their own children; 3) beliefs they have about their children's attitude to the rescue worker's job. These are collected and saved to use in the third part of the lesson.

**Part 1** Participants are asked to recall from their reading of the articles the typical responses children have when they have been exposed to a traumatic event or have been seriously injured. These are listed on a board or revealed on an overhead transparency as the audience names the responses. Each response is discussed briefly as it is listed. Before introducing the intervention techniques, a transparency showing the responses by age is displayed. The major differences in age levels are explained.

**Part II** A five-minute slide show of rescue workers and children is presented. Answers that were written on the sheets of paper at the beginning of the lesson are now read. These answers are used to elaborate the feelings that rescue workers have toward children and the difficulties they have relating to their own children. The worker's schedule, work-related dangers, and part-time employment can be contributing factors in the rescue worker/child relationship. Suggestions to improve family relationships are handed out and discussed. (If possible, these are to be printed on paper dolls.)

**METHODS:** Question and Answer; Discussion

**MATERIALS:** Articles on children's response to trauma  
Overhead projector and transparencies  
Slides, slide projector  
Board and chalk or markers  
Handout on improving family relationships

## ***LESSON VIII: THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE IN THE FAMILY***

**GOAL:** Participants will have an awareness of the family life and how this produces change within the family.

**OBJECTIVE:** Given information on the life cycle stages adapted from the work of David Olson and Hamilton McCubbin, individuals will identify the seven typical stages.

Following an exercise the couples will describe the family changes that have occurred in their nuclear and extended families and how these changes have positively and negatively affected them.

**PURPOSE:** Educating the emergency worker and significant other about the typical stages of the family life cycle may make each transition easier. If the couple anticipates how their life may change, the easier the transition may be. Through education, the emergency worker family will understand their family structure. If couples are aware of patterns in family behaviors, values, rules, and coping strategies, they are better equipped to problem solve at home and at work.

**PRESENTATION:** Participants are requested to write what they think are the seven stages of the family life cycle. After feedback from the participants, the instructor gives each person a handout on the **Family Life Cycle**. After summarizing the seven stages the group is divided into couples.

Each couple will discuss the major issues in each stage and the most common problems their extended families have experienced. They discuss with each other how these problems have positively and adversely affected them as individuals and as a couple.

After completing the discussion, each couple is requested to discuss the problems they might anticipate in their nuclear family. Following completion of the second exercise, the instructor will summarize and

request that each individual keep a journal of thoughts (see list). The next lesson will begin with the discussion of journal entries with an emphasis on how family rules, values, communication patterns, decision making style, and coping strategies influence individuals in their daily lives.

**METHODS:** Discussion, Group Activity

**MATERIALS:** Handouts on **Family Life Cycle**  
List of observations for journal entries

## **OBSERVATIONS FOR JOURNAL ENTRIES**

Observe both your extended and nuclear family members and make daily comments in your journal. Please bring your completed journal to the next meeting.

1. What are some of the coping strategies used by your family?
2. What are your thoughts about the coping strategies your family uses to manage life changes and unexpected events?
3. How do your extended family members interact?
4. What are your thoughts about the communication rules used by your extended family and how have these influenced the communication techniques used with your nuclear family?
5. What is the decision making style of your extended family?  
What is the decision making style of your nuclear family?  
What are your thoughts about who has the most authority in the decision making process?
6. What values and rules did you learn from your extended family and how are these applied to your relationship?

## **THE FAMILY LIFE CYCLE**

**David Olson and Hamilton McCubbin**

**STAGE 1:** Young married couples without children

**STAGE 2:** Families with preschoolers

**STAGE 3:** Families with school-age children

**STAGE 4:** Families with adolescents

**STAGE 5:** Launching families – sending young adults into the world

**STAGE 6:** The empty nest – life after the children

**STAGE 7:** Retirement years

## ***LESSON IX: MANAGEMENT STYLES AND RESULTING STRESS***

**GOAL:** To decrease the stress in the home environment by understanding how specific management styles generate stress. To reduce the probability of debilitating stress in emergency workers.

**OBJECTIVE:** Given information on each style of management, participants will describe the impact the management style has on employees.

Given information on management styles, participants will list suggestions to improve employee ability to function effectively under the management.

Following a role-play about management styles, participants will identify their positive and negative feelings under the management style used.

**PURPOSE:** If the work environment is hostile, negative, or overly controlling, the employee's stress is increased, and the individual is more susceptible to the extremes of personal and work stress. Educating emergency workers and their partners on management styles empowers them to address management stress and how this impacts their personal lives.

**PRESENTATION:** Participants are asked to refer to their handouts on management styles. The instructor gives a summary of the management styles and asks for feedback from the audience on how they believe employees would respond to that type of manager. They are then asked to list ways that an employee could change their interaction with this type of management to get the direction, respect, communication, etc. that they need.

On completing this introduction, the audience is divided into groups. One person is assigned to role of "manager" for the group and is given a cue card on how to fulfill their role. The managers are also given a copy of **The Pattern Game** and are asked to review it silently before group members receive a copy. Managers are told that the goal is for them to get their group to finish their task first once they are given the

signal to start. Managers are asked to give their group instructions about how to do the game. After being told to turn the papers over, the managers are then to direct, guide, encourage, etc., manage their members according to their assigned style.

Once every person has completed the game and a winner declared, discussion follows. The discussion should include the degree of tenseness they felt under their manager, feelings about the manager and feelings about themselves. Which style was most effective in getting the job done? Was there a cost that made it not worth winning? How would each of the management styles affect the worker's personal life? Finally, what are the conclusions on the most appropriate style?

**METHODS:** Discussion, Role-play

**MATERIALS:** Handouts of Management Styles  
Cue cards for the "Manager"  
Handouts on **The Pattern Game**

<b>Management Style</b>	<b>Positive Side</b>	<b>Negative Side</b>
1. The Critic	Informed: Evaluates with competence. Open minded. Listens carefully and accurately. Withholds judgment until facts are available. Insists on getting things done.	Dictator: Nagging, repressive, or opinionated parental-type boss who insists that things go his/her way.

Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Coach	Supportive: Encourages co-workers. Cheers others on. Gives pep talks. Helps others develop to full potential and is pleased with their successes.	Benevolent Dictator: Overwhelms and manipulates employees with concern. Overly helpful attitude encourages helplessness and dependency.
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Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

3. The Shadow	Liberator: Doesn't interfere. People are free to do "own thing", work at own pace, set own limits.	Loner: Often uses a closed door and wide desk to distance themselves.
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Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

4. The Analyst	Communicator: Has ability to collect data, analyze it and estimate probabilities. People are important and decisions include this basic value. Is clear, evasive, vague, or inconsistent.	Computer: Intent of processing data, especially related to economics, seldom shows sympathy and concern unless it could lead to economic profit.
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Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

5. The Pacifier

Negotiator: Provides a balanced atmosphere for employees who like to work on their own. Willing to examine the other side of a dispute so co-workers can relax and problems get solved.

Milquetoast: Obedient, compliant, always agreeing, scared, and a doormat. Gives in to superiors and subordinates. Tries to please everyone. Fearful of conflict. Never gets problems solved.

Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

6. The Fighter

Partner: Channels assertiveness toward teamwork. Will fight for success and will struggle to protect the dept., the budget, and personnel. Shares information with employees and clues them in on strategies.

Punk: Sulky, rebellious, hostile. Fights crooked. May show hostility by procrastinating in schedules, budgets, or by excessive competitiveness.

Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

7. The Inventor

Innovator: Creates an exciting atmosphere. Liked for flow of fresh ideas and enthusiasm. Can be entertaining but also counted on to come up with solutions.

Scatterbrain: So busy trying out new things that they do not allot the time and energy to complete a task. Often don't have skills to make their creative ideas understood and adopted. Often work in isolation and "spring" new ideas on others.

Impact on employee: \_\_\_\_\_

Suggestions: \_\_\_\_\_

Taken from: The OK Boss by Muriel James

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# DELIVERING THE DEATH MESSAGE

By Chaplain Lisle Kauffman

*The Rev. Lisle J. Kauffman has been with the Greater Round Lake Fire Protection District since 1978 where he also serves as Chaplain and Captain of Support Services. Chaplain Kauffman earned his certificate from the Federation of Fire Chaplains in 1991 and continues to be active as an FFC member and trainer. He is also chaplain for the Round Lake Beach Police Department and is a member of the International Conference of Police Chaplains from whom he received a Master Chaplain Certificate in 1989.*

## ***INTRODUCTION***

There is no question that the subject of death and dying is difficult. People really do not like to think about death. While everyone knows that they will die, they are not normally particularly interested in talking about the details of that experience. A good illustration is provided in considering how few people have even made out a will, something which eases difficulty for family members in the event of a death and is usually advisable, but is still ignored by most.

Some of life's most difficult moments are those moments when someone is informed that their loved one has died. There is a sense in which that moment is always unique to the individual and the situation. Each loss from a death is always unique to that person.

People may learn of a loved one's death in different ways. They may be present at the death, hear about it from relatives, receive a visit from a police officer or chaplain, or even hear about it on the evening news. For our purposes, we will group these into two headings, personal involvement and being notified by others.

## ***PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT AT A DEATH***

Sometimes a loved one dies in a family member's arms. Sometimes it happens in a bed with family and friends standing or sitting at the bedside. Perhaps the person died at the Thanksgiving table, or at the foot of the Christmas tree. Sometimes they die right next to others in accidents, or others come home and find them dead. Sometimes a death happens dramatically like the five fire fighters some years ago who died as they waved to their families who were watching the fire when the roof suddenly collapsed and plunged them into the fire below! If a person somehow witnesses the death, notification, of course, is not necessary even though similar pastoral care interventions may be appropriate and needed.

## ***BEING NOTIFIED OF A DEATH***

For many it falls to someone else to share the news. A relative calls on the phone or writes a letter. Sometimes they come by the house or place of business or they meet at the hospital. A Doctor or nurse breaks the news. It may be heard over the radio or seen on TV. A Lexington Kentucky airplane crash was reported immediately on television and the radio. Anyone who had a loved one on that flight out of Lexington at

6:00 a.m. knew their loved one was on that plane. Sometimes it is discovered by reading the newspaper. Sometimes the death may even be recorded on a police car video tape.

The delivery of the death message may be done compassionately, but it is not always so. When a man came in to the emergency room dead on arrival, a nurse told the doctor it was up to him to tell the family of the death. The doctor called out of the emergency room door into the waiting area, "Your husband was already dead when he got to the hospital. I don't even know why they brought him in." There is no question that this doctor did deliver the death message, but there is also no question that he did not help the family through a most difficult time. Delivering the death message is more than just telling someone about a death!

***There is no one best way to break the news of a death***

Often this task falls to a chaplain. How should it be done? One of the challenges is that there is no one best way to break the news of a death. The following information is intended to help chaplains gain insights that will make them more effective when called upon to make a death notification, including a deepened sensitivity to the uniqueness of each and every death. Death notification should never become a routine task to the chaplain. The material in this chapter may actually make performing a death notification more difficult for the chaplain, not easier, in that the chaplain will learn the hard work of a "good" death notification.

## ***DEATHS IN THE FIRE SERVICE***

For the purposes of this study and the work of the fire chaplain, death notifications can be divided into two categories: "fire service" deaths and "other deaths". Many skills and considerations will apply to both, but fire service deaths will add a layer of involvement and difficulty for the fire chaplain.

***Fire service deaths will add a layer of involvement and difficulty for the fire chaplain.***

In thinking of a firefighter's death, the chaplain's mind may immediately flash to the fiery building with firefighters heroically struggling to rescue a fallen comrade from the havoc of the fire. Though these images are graphic and grab attention, they may mask the thinking process that a chaplain must go through in considering the death notifications to be made. Remember that deliberate thought is required when dealing with the death of a firefighter. The excitement and confusion surrounding a line of duty death can easily cloud the procedure which must be followed by the chaplain.

Death, including a firefighter's death, can and will be viewed in many different ways. The following humorous quips may help to illustrate different views of the same incident.

*I want to die in my sleep like my grandfather did, not like the other three screaming passengers in his car.*

*I am sure most of you remember the story of the three men who were standing at the gates of heaven. St Peter asked the first man what happened. He said, "I don't know. I go jogging every morning. I was just running down the street and all of a sudden a refrigerator fell on me and I died." St. Peter asked the second man what happened. He said, "I thought my wife was cheating on me so I came home early from my night job, and I heard voices in my apartment. So I beat the door down and rushed inside. The window was open and I saw this man running from the building so I picked up the refrigerator and threw it out the window and hit him with it. When I did that I had a massive heart attack and died." St. Peter asked the 3rd man what happened. He said, "I was just sitting in this refrigerator minding my own business when someone threw it out the window."*

***Fire ground deaths are often dramatic***

When talking about delivering the death message one has to reflect gently on the reality of what death is and how it comes. Sometimes in one's sleep, sometimes by accident, sometimes with screaming terror, sometimes through one's own faults, sometimes through illness, and sometimes by one's own hand or someone else's.

## **WHERE AND HOW OF FIREFIGHTER DEATHS**

Fire ground deaths are often dramatic While deaths can and do occur everywhere, when considering a firefighter death, the thought of fire/rescue ground operations deaths usually comes to mind first.

### ***FIRE/EMS OPERATIONS DEATH***

Fire ground deaths are often dramatic: Roof collapse, Building collapse, Wall collapse, Floor collapse, Flash over, Backdraft, Lost in the fire, Out of air, Explosions, Falls, Ladders, Stairways, Elevator shafts, Lost during rescue operations.

The list is endless and usually news worthy. However, most fire operation deaths are found in two very un-heroic circumstances: Vehicle operations on the way to and from the scene, and heart attacks. Then there are those even less heroic like in station accidental deaths or suicide and murder. Intriguingly, most Fire/EMS deaths will not be in the heroic line of duty. When chaplains are reflecting on "Delivering the Death Message", are they prepared to grasp that most messages will NOT be related to the heroic line of death experiences? But they will still be awful.

***ACCIDENTAL DEATH***

The Fire Chief of the Lake Villa, Illinois Fire Department died in a car crash on the highway just outside of town. His fire department was the responding department to that crash. How many times has this scenario been worked out in the Fire and Rescue service across this land?

***SUDDEN ILLNESS DEATH***

Chicago just lost a veteran Lieutenant at a major fire when he collapsed with a fatal heart attack. The awesome "from quiet to rush" nature of the job and the not so good diets take their toll.

***LONG ILLNESS DEATH***

Cancer and lung disorders seem to take a fearsome toll of fire personnel. Those years of smoke and particulates take their toll.

***Cancer and lung disorders seem to take a fearsome toll of fire personnel.***

***FIRE/EMS SUICIDE DEATH***

Where are we as Chaplains in our journey of faith and the issue of suicide? Are we prepared to deal with this kind of message? I was startled to discover that around 400 law enforcement officers can take their lives in any given year while 160 or so can lose their lives in the line of duty! I do not have fire fighter suicide death figures because that is not the point of my reflections with you, but I wonder if the same phenomenon is true in the Fire/EMS industry. How many of us have had to deal with fire fighter suicides? We look around and discover that answer is too many!

***Richard Corey***  
  
*Corey went down town,  
We people on the pavement looked at him  
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,  
Clean favored, and imperially slim.  
And he was always quietly arrayed,  
And he was always human when he talked-  
"Good-morning,"  
And he glittered when he walked.  
  
And he was rich: yes, richer than a king  
And admirably schooled ' in every grace:  
In fine' we thought that he was everything  
To make us wish that we were in his place.  
So on we worked, and waited for the light,  
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;  
And Richard Corey, one calm summer night,  
Went home and put a bullet through his head.*

## ***HOMICIDE DEATH***

It is a reality from which we cannot escape even for fire, rescue, EMS, and law enforcement personnel. How about those terrible cases where a fire fighter murdered a fellow fire fighter or a police officer who murdered his partner!

## ***NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES***

Whether the death is within the fire service or in the general public, the procedures for the fire chaplain to follow in making notification of family members remains similar. Learning and following a set practice will save the chaplain from making needless and sometimes hurtful mistakes in the field. There is no completely right way to make a death notification, but there are many wrong ways!

***There is no completely right way to make a death notification, but there are many wrong ways!***

A sensitive picture shows a chaplain at the front door of a house. The chaplain is about to deliver news that will change that family's life forever. Never again will things be the same.



**Take seriously that responsibility.** This is not an end; it is a beginning of their worst nightmare.

## **VERIFY DETAILS**

Often the chaplain may already be on scene of a death and have first-hand knowledge of the details. Sometimes the chaplain will receive details from second or third hand report of a death and be asked to make notification based on this information. If the chaplain does not have first hand knowledge of the details of a death, three things must be done: **VERIFY, VERIFY, VERIFY!** All details of the death and the identity *must* be verified before notification is made.

Chaplain Lisle Kauffman tells the following story; "I know of a death call where the chaplain informed a family that their daughter had been killed in a car accident. The family responded with the traditional, *no it cannot be*. The chaplain struggled to assure them that it was true. "But

she is upstairs in bed." the parents cried out. The mother ran up stairs, and shortly brought down their daughter who had given her driver's license to a friend to use."

*The circumstances and details of a death may demand totally different response from the chaplain*

## CONSIDER THE AUDIENCE

The circumstances and details of a death may demand totally different response from the chaplain in notification. The nature of the death, the place and time, all have impact on the delivery of the message. Another major factor to consider is the audience. To whom is the chaplain bringing the bad news?

<i>Family Members</i>	<i>Co-workers</i>
<i>Fire Company Members</i>	<i>Lovers</i>
<i>Fire Chief</i>	<i>Business Partners</i>
<i>Friends</i>	<i>Others</i>

## PLACE OF NOTIFICATION

Where is the death notification to be delivered? Will the location present any special concerns? Is it a place where those being notified can feel most comfortable? Do more than one location need to be notified simultaneously?

<i>a home</i>	<i>workplace</i>
<i>fire station</i>	<i>dispatch center</i>
<i>School</i>	<i>hospital</i>

## RECIPIENT PERSONAL HISTORY

The people to whom the chaplain will bring this news are people with a history already in place. They may well have other problems that the chaplain will need to take into consideration. They may have health problems, heart disease, deafness [take a tablet of paper on which to write messages and allow them to write questions and messages back to you], blindness, cancer, mental problems.

Recipients may be angry at the fire service. They may be angry at the chief or a Captain or a blue shirt. The family may have financial or personal problems. They may have significant problems that will make

assimilating this news even more difficult. There may be marital problems which will make this moment even more awful.

*Be as prepared as you can by getting as much information as possible*

Be as prepared as you can by getting as much information as possible about the people receiving the message. Chaplain Lisle recalls, "I had an ambulance waiting around the corner while I was delivering a death message about a police officer who had been shot and killed with his partner in the line of duty. His mother had a very serious heart condition. We did not need the ambulance but they were glad to have been available even though it was 02:00 in the morning." Be prepared for any possible situation which can be anticipated ahead of time.

## ***MODELS FOR DEATH NOTIFICATION***

As mentioned above, each notification is unique, but there are some things the chaplain can try to keep in mind for all such tasks. The following two models give basics to be used in most death notifications.

### **THE PARIS MODEL**

This is a model by William Hoerger, Fort Wayne Fire Department.

#### **PREPARATION**

##### **SELF/PARTNER**

The chaplain should try to have someone accompany him/her. Be careful who the partner will be if possible. An inappropriate partner can make the situation worse. The chaplain cannot always predict what the other person is going to say. There may be persons who could trigger problems just by their presence. Try to avoid these if possible.

##### **FAMILY AND SIGNIFICANT OTHERS**

Know who the family members and the significant others are. Be aware that there may be hidden grievers.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENT**

##### **BREVITY**

Be thoughtful, but do not beat around the bush. Do not lie or expand the story. Be compassionate but do not deliver false hope. Chaplain

Lisle relates, "I was in an emergency room when a man was brought in DOA. The nurse insisted the doctor inform the wife waiting in the E.R. waiting room. He pushed open the E.R. door and said 'He was dead already when they brought him in. I don't know why they even brought him'. He closed the door and walked away! He was brief, but he was not much help to the family."

## **CLARITY**

Be sure to be clear and make sure the family understands the message being brought. It is a good idea to use the word "death." "He is dead." means something very different than "He is gone." If someone is struggling hard with denial he or she can be asked point blank if he/she understands what is being said. "I remember a nurse who told the family, 'Your mom has slipped away.' The daughter said, 'How could she slip away. She couldn't even walk!'"

## **RESPONSE**

Human beings are all different. Do not fall into the trap of expecting everyone to respond to this crushing news in the same ways. There are some general responses that are seen more than others.

## **INITIAL RESPONSE**

Expect shock, numbness, disbelief, rejection of the news. Some will experience ear shattering wailing, screaming, flailing about, running, uncontrolled crying. This dramatic response is usually of short to moderate duration, although may last quite a long time. Do not feel compelled to shorten this response. Their grief is not the chaplain's responsibility. It may be uncomfortable but do not feel the need to protect them from this grief. It may however, be advisable to move them to a place of privacy or safety where this uncontrolled grief can be ventilated.

Anger may be seen at any place in this process. The anger can be rational or irrational. It can be reflected in rage, cursing and violence. It can be directed at the deceased, the doctors, the fire department, the police department, the chiefs, the captains, fellow police or fire personnel, nursing staff, co-workers, family members, GOD, or THE CHAPLAIN. Remember, even though recipients may be angry with God, chaplains do not have to defend God.

It is important to realize that the relief in expressing this anger will help them towards acceptance of what they cannot now accept. Part of what they are raging against is the feeling of loss of control. They have lost control of much of their perceived universe. And the chaplain cannot give it back to them.

## **STAGES OF GRIEF**

The chaplain may see some or even all of the following grief stages during a death notification, though often not in order.

**Denial:** "It just cannot be." "She just pulled out of the driveway five minutes ago." "I was just talking to him on the phone."

**Rejection:** The grieving person will often then reject the whole reality of that bad news. Their grief can be so overwhelming they will just have to "shut down".

**Withdrawal:** They may withdraw in to themselves and pull away from you, other family members and friends.

**Catatonic State:** Some will move into a catatonic state where they will escape from the pain which they can no longer tolerate. Grievers may find this a period of rest and recovery from the exhaustion that the grief has caused them.

**Depression:** Most people will experience a form of depression either Reactive or Preparatory. Some will move into a deep depression. For the most part the management of depression will not be the responsibility of those making the death notification.

**Acceptance:** The vast majority of people who receive a death notification will reach a level of acceptance in the messenger's presence if they are offered the needed support that assists people into coming to terms with the death.

Most people will experience subsequent, SUDDEN TEMPORARY UPSURGES OF GRIEF. Just when they begin to think that they have gained control of themselves and are ready to deal with the realities they must face they will recycle the whole process all over again. In fact these sudden temporary upsurges of grief will follow them through their whole grief recovery process.

## **INFORMATION**

### **APPROPRIATENESS**

Give the family all of the appropriate information that is *known to be true*. This is not a time for supposition, guesses, or might have been. If the chaplain does not know, that is what the family is told. The chaplain may need to say that something is "apparent", or "may have been" but should be very careful. What may appear to be one thing may turn out to be another. A lady in a garage with the engine running was listed as a probable suicide. An autopsy revealed she had a stroke just as she closed the garage doors but before she could turn off the engine!

## **WRITTEN**

Make sure ALL of the information is written down. The dullest pencil is better than the sharpest mind. People will want to know where the body is. They will want to know how to get belongings back. They will need to know to whom they can talk if they have questions. The chaplain and the survivors may have trouble remembering information that has just been given to them. **WRITE IT DOWN!**

## **SUPPORT**

### **FAMILY, FRIENDS, CLERGY, COMMUNICATOR**

Be sure to leave them in the hands of a support system. Call their clergy if they have one. Call family and friends who may be helpful. Encourage those family and friends to come to where the griever is. Someone needs to be a "communicator" for the griever; that person who will handle calls for them. It is best if the chaplain can provide a support system in place. Protect them from intrusions.

## ***SOME THINGS TO WATCH OUT FOR***

### **MEAN SPIRITED PEOPLE**

Some people are truly mean spirited by personality and temperament and like it or not they will be out there too. They can be truly dangerous and chaplains need to keep assessing the people around the scene as well as the patients and clients with whom they are dealing. *Pay attention to mood swings!*

### **THE DRUNK AND ALCOHOL**

The drunk is an obvious source of concern because they can be truly unpredictable and because of the alcohol impairment are often incapable of understanding what is going on around them. The real risk is they feel so competent and in control.

### **THOSE ON EITHER LEGAL OR ILLEGAL DRUGS**

Depending on the substances they are taking they can be significant risks to themselves and too others. Do not hesitate to ask if people are taking medication and what it is for.

### **THE EMOTIONALLY OR MENTALLY ILL**

Remember that apart from some drastic signs and some forms of particular behavior, identifying the emotionally or mentally ill can be very difficult. Chaplains must be sensitive to this reality. Mental illness is real and often present and it will present a complex and challenging dimension to death notification.

## **THE ABC'S OF DEATH NOTIFICATION**

Another model by Chaplain Denny Strand uses the ABC's of death notification to help the chaplain organize thoughts and actions.

### **APPROACH**

#### **ABILITY**

The chaplain must encompass physical and mental proficiency and have the competence to release the message with skillfulness, sensitivity and compassion.

#### **ACCOMPLISHMENT**

The Chaplain's task involves purpose for being where he or she is. The goal is to carry the message through to completion at a rate reflective to the recipients response while listening with empathy to their verbal reactions and their body language.

#### **ACCOMMODATION**

The recipient must be helped to accommodate the news being brought. The Chaplain must accommodate the responses of the hearer.

### **BEAR THE NEWS**

#### **BIRTH**

The process is bringing a message previously unknown to the hearers, and that message involves pain. It is the birth of a whole new way of life. A Life they did not want. A life they will have to live anyway.

#### **BEHAVIOR**

The Chaplain's behavior will be seen as caring or uncaring, competent or incompetent. Prepare before ringing the door bell what that behavior will look like. Be prepared for the hearer's behavior to not match the deliverer's expectations.

#### **BEREAVEMENT**

Because the recipient is deprived of a part of their life, the deliverer will see expressions of suffering that may startle him or her. The news has taken away the hearer's "normal life" and varied forms of grief will ensue. Depending on how the chaplain bears that bereavement with them, will declare him or her a friend or an enemy.

## **CONCLUDE THE NOTIFICATION**

### **CONTROL**

Control yourself and your emotions. Control the situation; do not let it get out of hand. Give them back some control of their lives. Let them make decisions. Listen to them to discover what control they want to take back.

### **CONSOLE**

Sometimes words are useless. Sometimes all that can be done is just being there. There does not always have to be talk. Silence is powerful too. Words that seem powerful and supportive to the deliverer may seem meaningless to the hearer. Do what *they* need. Be sensitive to *their* needs and *their* expectations. Kind words, appropriate and accepted hugs [hugs have to be carefully thought through, different people have very different acceptance levels for hugs] can be powerful demonstrations of concern. Men and women receive hugs very differently. When invited by the grieving, a careful use of scripture in appropriate and thoughtful ways can be helpful. Prayer when it is by their invitation to pray can be helpful. An inquiry, "Would you like us to say a prayer", opens the door for them. The answer may well be NO. Other responses to their invitations for help and comfort can very useful to the hurting.

### **COMPASSION**

Compassion is not just feeling sympathy, but doing something about it. Act to help. People may need rides, phone calls made, baby sitters secured, and other people who need to be notified.

## ***DOS & DON'TS OF BEARING THE BAD NEWS***

The following is a list of reminders to do and not do in death notification from Chaplain Lisle.

### **DO'S**

1. Verify and write the information down, get the correct spelling and correct pronunciations of the names if possible.
2. Get as much information about exactly what happened as possible, including if it is unknown or under investigation.
3. Get the people to a safe place before breaking the news to them.
4. Protect them from the public.
5. Get them seated if possible.
6. Get everyone together, including the children if possible.

7. Tell them honestly, but gently. "I have bad news." You do not fool them. They already know something is wrong because you are there!
8. Tell them honestly in clear words.
9. Before you leave make sure they understand and that you have used the "D" word, DEAD. If in doubt ask them if they truly understand. Remember they will be in shock.
10. Try to leave them some control to make decisions- Let them, tell you who else should or should NOT be notified. It is often their setting, let them make decisions about it.  
Many will want to make coffee, get drinks, and offer cake. Remember this is an attempt to gain some control. Be accepting of their offers.
11. Stand between them and an uncaring world. (i.e. The coroner may want to know what to do with the body. The hospital may want to know what funeral will pick up the remains) Know your local laws and options. The grieving may look to you for ideas.
12. Assist them in accomplishing what they feel is necessary. They may even ask for your help in picking out a funeral home. Know the options and be prepared to share those options with them.
13. Offer suggestions that they may want to follow. You may want to call their religious leader, a friend, or a neighbor for them. There may be things you know they will have to face. Be honest and prepare them for it, i.e. the police may have hard questions that need to be asked now.

## **DON'TS**

1. Do not show your prejudices! (i.e. same gender relationships, mixed racial or religious unions, or people sharing intimate relationships that you may disapprove of) To be successful you will need to know yourself well enough to guess and understand what relationships make you uncomfortable. You may not always know about these in advance.
2. Do not presume to know how they feel.
3. Do not feel the need to defend God, the doctors, the hospital, the nurses, the staff, the fire department, the police department, the chief, the deceased, yourself. There will be time to help them with this later.
4. Do not abandon the hurting person to make it easier for yourself.
5. Do not use theological or religious language that they may not understand or may to them to be inappropriate now. Your theology may not be useful to them at this time. i.e. "It is the will of God." Whose God? And who says so?
6. Do not assume that you are exempt from grief reactions during death notifications. Watch out for your own weaknesses. Just being a Chaplain does not mean you are on top of a death. When my father died I had to comfort the hospital chaplain because she could not understand my "personal" grief. She kept trying to point out that I was a pastor and should "know" that my father was safe. She missed the point of "my" grief.

After the death message is delivered some people may want to see and spend some time with the body. This is an important part of the grief process if it is possible. Sometimes it is and sometimes it is not possible. But do not dismiss this request thinking you are doing the family a favor.

## ***THE POST MESSAGE REACTIONS***

Since Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's seminal work "On Death and Dying" many have offered observations on how people react to death and their grief reactions. It really does not matter which theory you personally hold dear. What is important is that the chaplain realizes that everyone will not fit into any neat package of how they are going to react. Be prepared for anything.

A chaplain broke the news of a woman's suicide to her husband, whose response was, "She didn't kill the dog too, did she?" Be patient and compassionate as the person works through this nightmare of tears.

## ***OUR OWN REACTIONS***

A successful chaplain must be in touch with his/her own personal grief reactions. Chaplains must recognize that they are affected by these events and their own personal histories make them vulnerable to their personal grief reactions. Chaplains may often predict situations that could overwhelm them, but be prepared for surprises. For example breaking the news about a death of a fire fighter or EMT or police officer is NOT a routine death notification.

Remember that one of the primary stressors is the death of one's own. The person may be personally known. Chaplains will need to control their own personal grief as they work through this loss with the family, the department and the community.

## ***CONCLUSION***

"Who will go for us?" "Here Am I, send me." This is why we do what we do: God calls and we go. Just do it right. Good intentions count for nothing in the sad and difficult business of delivering a death notification. Think carefully how you would want a total stranger to tell you that your child is dead! Be that caring.