

NIAGARA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/19/2013	SUBJECT: NOTIFICATIONS; NEXT OF KIN	Number 314.00 (NYSLEAP O-43-7)
RESCINDS: 04/15/2003		Number of pages 2

I. Policy:

A. It is the responsibility of the Coroner's Office to notify relatives or friends of the deceased pursuant to a death investigation. Hospital staff will normally handle family notifications involving seriously injured or seriously ill persons. However, members of this department shall assist the Coroner's Office or hospital staff whenever reasonably requested to do so. Officers are encouraged to call upon the services of the Police Chaplain whenever necessary to assist with notifications.

B. Outside Agency Notifications:

1. If the request for notification of next of kin originates from an outside agency, an officer shall be dispatched. Names of the deceased or injured persons shall not be transmitted over the radio.
2. The officer handling the call will normally deliver the message. However, under certain circumstances, the officer may use discretion as to whether to actually deliver the message or have the person call the originating agency concerning the emergency. Messages, which contain incomplete information or do not clearly indicate the nature of the problem, should usually be handled by informing the relative or friend to call and receive the information directly from the originating agency. It is desirable that a friend or relative of the person receiving the message be present at the time of notification even if the person appears to be in good physical and mental health.

C. On Scene Notifications:

1. Since grief and bereavement may cause varied reactions ranging from none at all to a strong emotional reaction and even violence, safety is a priority. The open display of emotion is sometimes helpful in grief recovery if safety and investigative needs permit. It is important to remember that different cultures express grief differently.

2. It is the right of the family to see the deceased and, when possible, an option must be offered to see the body. A vital part of the grief process is saying, as privately as possible, goodbye to the deceased. Time should be allowed for the survivors to do this before the body is removed.

3. In cases of questionable death or a possible crime scene, care should be taken to fully explain to the family members present what is suspected and explain step-by-step the procedures that will be followed. Under no circumstances shall a family member, friend, or other unauthorized person be allowed access to an active crime scene.