



Public Information Officer Quick Guide: Managing a Line-of-Duty Death (LODD)

1. Immediate Priorities

- Confirm details internally before releasing ANY information.
- Ensure the family has been notified before acknowledging the incident publicly.
- Establish a unified command for public information roles.
- Assign a Family Liaison Officer to coordinate communication with the family.

2. Expect Intense Media and Public Interest

- Prepare for rapid inquiries seeking the who/what/when/where/how.
- Designate a media staging area early.
- Maintain message discipline—no speculation, no unverified details.
- Provide regular updates to control rumor spread.

3. Coordinate With Supporting PIOs

- Request mutual-aid PIO support—LODD responses are overwhelming for a single PIO.
- Use additional personnel to monitor social media, manage media on-scene, draft releases, and assist with logistics.
- Ensure all messaging flows through the lead agency's approval process.

4. Release of Information

- ALL information must be approved by the lead investigative agency.
- Never release sensitive investigative details prematurely.
- Public release of the fallen officer's name requires explicit family approval.
- Use clear, accurate, compassionate language when confirming the death.

5. Social Media Management

- Expect misinformation, speculation, and leaked photos/videos.
- Monitor social channels continuously.
- Post verified facts and avoid emotional responses.
- Establish a pinned post that becomes the official update location.

6. Scheduled Briefings

- Hold briefings at predictable intervals to reduce constant inquiries.
- Keep briefings factual, short, and respectful.
- Reinforce investigative boundaries: “Certain details cannot be released at this time.”

7. Family, Agency, and Community Messaging

- Separate operational facts from emotional or memorial messaging.
- Acknowledge the loss with compassion while protecting the family’s privacy.
- Provide internal updates to staff—your agency members are grieving too.

8. Planning Memorial and Funeral Communications

- Work closely with the family to honor their wishes.
- Coordinate processions, honors, and funeral details with regional partners.
- Prepare a unified public communication plan for community attendance, traffic, and livestream options.

9. Document Everything

- Maintain copies of press releases, briefing notes, media contacts, and timelines.
- Record lessons learned for future response planning.
- Evaluate what worked and what needs adjustment after the incident concludes.

10. Key Reminder

During a LODD, the PIO must help protect the dignity of the fallen, support the family, guide the agency, and preserve public trust. Calm, coordinated, compassionate messaging is essential.