

Funeral Service Guidelines

Fire departments throughout the state of Illinois have had to, or may have to face the difficult task of being involved in an official funeral for one or more of its members. One of the more difficult questions a department must decide upon is what types of funeral honors are appropriate for the deceased.

In making a decision, primary consideration must be given to the families' feelings and desires, and past or future practices of the department.

Scope:

This guideline defines different levels of honor with corresponding suggested arrangement options. It is recommended that departments adopt such a plan as internal protocol prior to its need to establish consistency.

Before any plan is instituted, the deceased member's family must agree with the department's intend participation. During the entire funeral process, the department must highly consider the deceased member's family's wishes. The family may choose to lessen some of the honors as suggested in the appropriate level of service; however, they should not influence increasing the "level of honor."

Assistance:

The Illinois Fire Chiefs Funeral Committee is available at all times to answer questions or assist in funeral matters. This committee has participated in planning, arranging and conducting nearly 200 funerals since 1983. There are no fees for this assistance and suggested fire service funeral guidelines are available from the association. The committee can be contacted through the main office at 800-662-0732.

Definitions:

1. Line-of-Duty: the death must be the result of a traumatic injury suffered in the line of duty.
2. Job Related Traumatic Injury: A blow to the body by an outside force, i.e., crushing injuries suffered in a building collapse, apparatus accident or fall. Burns, smoke inhalation and such climactic injuries as heatstroke or frostbite are considered traumatic injuries.
3. Job Related Non-Traumatic Injuries: A non-traumatic injury that is strongly believed or has been proven to be attributable to the job.
4. Examples: Stress, heart attacks, strokes, diseases and mental illness (suicide).
5. Active member – a Full-time member or volunteer member of Fire or EMS services in an active capacity.
6. Inactive: A retired, former or pensioned member of a Fire or EMS service.
7. Affiliate Member: An individual who has served in some capacity with the department, such as a commissioner, trustee, dispatcher etc.
8. Non-Job Related Death: Deaths, natural and traumatic that are not Fire, EMS duty related.

Arrangement Options:

American Flag – Any active or honorably discharged member of the United States Armed Forces should have the American flag draped or displayed on the casket. At time of internment, the American Flag will be folded and presented to surviving family "ON BEHALF OF A GRATEFUL NATION." Representatives from the Armed Forces, VFW, American Legion etc., shall have first right of folding and presentation to the family. If unable to obtain members from these groups, the Fire Department should undertake this responsibility.

Badge Shrouds

Black elastic or tape is used to cover a horizontal portion of the uniform badges as a reflection of "in mourning" and should only be worn by the stricken department.

Bagpipers

Used in traditional fire service ceremony. "Pipers" accompany and play music during movement of the casket and, if desired, during the service.

Bell Service

A portable fire department bell is tolled at the conclusion of the religious ceremony. One member reads a statement regarding the deceased's last alarm. A second member tolls the bell at the conclusion.

Bugler

Buglers can be one or two fire service personnel who sound taps at the cemetery.

Chaplain

A fire service chaplain is clergy who is an official member of a department.

Color Guards

Color Guards are a trained unit of members carrying the national and local flags. Color guards participate in all marching processions. (The IAFF has a trained unit available for IAFF members).

Crossed Ladders

The use of two aerial trucks crossing extended ladders or booms (with the American Flag hanging from the apex) located at or en route to the cemetery.

Eulogy

Fire Service member(s) speaking in remembrance as part of the funeral service.

Fire Engine Caisson

A Fire Engine Caisson is the fire department pumper which carries the casket.

Fire Service Flag - A flag that may be purchased from the Illinois Fire Chiefs Association that is used to adorn the casket at the wake and funeral service. The flag is folded and presented to the family at the interment.

Flower Unit

A flower unit is a fire department vehicle that transports flowers during the procession.

Funeral Director

The licensed funeral director selected by the family to make the appropriate arrangements and who must be involved in all planning or providing funeral honors.

Hearse

The vehicle provided by the funeral director which carries a casket.

Honor Guards

An Honor Guard is one or two uniformed fire service members who stand guard at the casket during the wake.

Honor Detail

Non-detailed uniformed and visiting department members present to pay tribute.

Pallbearers

Active: Uniformed members assigned to carry the casket.

Honorary: Uniformed members not assigned to carrying the casket. However they are placed in an honorary position leading the casket.

Station Bunting

Station Bunting is mourning drapes that are placed on the outside of public building and fire stations.

Vehicle Bunting

Vehicle Bunting is mourning drapes that are used to decorate fire vehicles participating in caisson or flower unit details (available for use through the IL Fire Chiefs Association).

Walk Through

A walk through is a predetermined time during the wake when uniformed members and dignitaries enter for a unified tribute.

Type of Services:

Level One

Definite: Death as result of line-of-duty or job related. This may include an inactive member whose death has stemmed from an injury sustained during active duty.

Level Two

Definition: Death of an active member, non-job-related.

Level Three

Definition: Death of an inactive member, non-job-related or death of an affiliate member.

Suggested Options

Level ONE

American Flag*
Badge Shrouds
Bagpipers
Bell Service
Bugler
Color Guards
Crossed ladders
Eulogy
Fire service caisson
Fire service flag
Flower unit
Honor guards
Honor detail
Pallbearers, ACTIVE
Station bunting
Vehicle bunting
Walk through

Level TWO

American Flag*
Badge Shrouds

Bell Service

Eulogy
Fire service caisson
Fire service flag
Flower unit
Honor guards
Honor detail
Pallbearers, HONORARY
Station bunting
Vehicle bunting
Walk through

Level THREE

American Flag*
Badge Shrouds

Bell Service

Hearse
Fire service flag

Pallbearers, HONORARY
Station bunting

Walk through

***Used only if the deceased was a veteran.**

Funeral Assistance

When a fire department suffers the loss of a member, either on-duty or off, it is often difficult for the department members to cope with their emotions and the need to help the family.

The IFCA will supply officers to help the department with the planning and arrangements of a funeral. They will assist with protocols to honor the memory of the fallen firefighter. They will work with the department to allow members to perform any roles they can.

For more information, contact the IFCA office at **800.662.0786** or email execdir@illinoisfirechiefs.org