

PHOENIX FIRE DEPARTMENT

VOLUMES 1 – Operations Manual

LINE OF DUTY DEATH – INVESTIGATION

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As soon as possible after a line of duty death has occurred, the Fire Chief shall assign an Investigation Team to conduct an investigation of the circumstances of the event. The objective of this team shall be to thoroughly analyze and document the events leading to the death and to make recommendations aimed at preventing similar occurrences in the future.

This procedure may also be utilized in the event of a serious accident involving Fire Department personnel that may or may not have resulted in death or injuries.

The principal goal of the Investigation Team shall be to identify the causal factors pertaining to the event and to recommend actions that would prevent or reduce the risk of a similar event.

A secondary objective shall be to obtain, document and secure evidence, which may be a factor in any regulatory actions or litigation resulting from the incident.

The Investigation Team report shall be separate and distinct from any Fire Cause Investigation. A copy of the Fire Investigation report should be included in the final report package.

The Investigation Team report and all related documentation shall be an internal Fire Department administrative report.

The investigation of incidents involving death or serious injury to Fire Department members shall be directed by an officer designated by the Fire Chief. The Investigation Team shall report to the Fire Chief through the designated Team Leader, who shall be responsible for the management of the investigative process.

The Investigative Team shall include the Fire Department Safety Officer, a Performance Auditor and such additional personnel as may be required by the specific circumstances of the event.

When a member of a represented employee group is involved in the incident the union shall be invited to appoint a member to the Investigation Team.

All members of the Fire Department shall give their full and complete cooperation to the Investigation Team.

The duties and responsibilities of the Investigation Team shall include:

- gathering and analysis of all physical evidence relating to the event
- written interview summaries of all witnesses with direct or indirect knowledge of the circumstances
- documentation of radio traffic, telephone conversations, witness statements, photographs, film, videotape and related information
- consultation with persons having special knowledge of the factors involved in the incident, including experts and consultants from the private sector
- liaison with other agencies involved in investigation of the incident
- development of a full written report on the incident, including conclusions and recommendations

The Investigation Team Leader shall establish and maintain an ongoing liaison with the City Attorney, Personnel Safety Division and Risk Management Division relating to the investigation.

It is the policy of the Fire Department to cooperate fully with all other governmental agencies having legal cause to be involved in the investigation of a Line of Duty Death incident and to cooperate voluntarily with organizations working in the areas of fire service occupational safety and health education and training.

The Division of Occupational Safety and Health of the Arizona Industrial Commission will conduct an investigation of incidents resulting in serious injury or death of Fire Department members. The Investigation Team will provide liaison with the OSHA investigators.

Other governmental agencies that may be involved in an investigation include:

United States Fire Administration
National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Law Enforcement Agencies
State Fire Marshal
Arizona Industrial Commission

The participation of these agencies shall be at their own discretion, depending on the circumstances of the particular incident. These agencies may or may not produce their own reports of the incident with recommendations or corrective actions. These reports do not supercede or substitute for the Investigation Team Report.

The Investigation Team shall utilize the resources of individuals and agencies outside the Fire Department to assist in the investigation and/or provide technical consultation when necessary. These resources include:

National Fire Protection Association
International Association of Fire Fighters
Consultants
Testing Laboratories
American Petroleum Institute

DOCUMENTATION

The Investigation Team shall ensure that the scene of the incident is fully documented, including diagrams, photographs and observations.

When feasible, all witness interviews shall be recorded and/or transcribed. An investigator's notes should be used only to refresh the memory, and once they are reduced to report form, destroyed.

NOTES:

1. Employees who are members of represented groups shall have the right to have a union representative present during an interview.
2. The Investigation Team shall coordinate its activities with Fire Investigations to avoid interference in any criminal investigation relating to the incident.

THE INVESTIGATION TEAM SHALL

Obtain and secure tapes and printouts of telephone and radio conversations and CAD transactions relating to the incident. The pertinent aspects of the radio and telephone tapes shall be transcribed.

Gather and document any physical evidence relating to the incident. Physical evidence shall be secured and labeled.

Obtain, examine and secure all protective clothing and equipment used by the personnel involved in the incident. The performance of the protective clothing and equipment shall be included in the report of the incident.

Review and comment on the application of standard operating procedures to the incident, the observance of procedures, their effect on the situation and recommendations for changes, additions or deletions.

Attempt to obtain any photographs, videotape or other information relating to the incident from news media or other sources. Such evidence shall be obtained with the written agreement that it is to be used only for investigative and educational purposes.

Interact and cooperate with Fire Investigations and law enforcement personnel in their activities related to the incident.

When feasible, the Investigation Team shall obtain copies of autopsy reports, medical treatment records, injury reports and other information relating to the members involved in the incident.

The Fire Chief shall determine the schedule and method of presentation for the final report of the Investigation Team.