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| PBP FORM 290  PITTSBURGH BUREAU OF POLICE <i>"...honor, integrity, courage, respect, and compassion."</i> | | SUBJECT: "POLICE RESPONSE TO NATURAL AND/OR SUDDEN DEATHS" | ORDER NUMBER: 40-21 |
| | | PLEAC STANDARD: NONE | PAGE 1 OF 4 |
| RE-ISSUE DATE: 11/4/2021 | EFFECTIVE DATE: 07/30/14 | REVIEW MONTH: JULY | RESCINDS: NONE |
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1.0 POLICY

1.1 It is the policy of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police to respond to any instance of an unattended death that occurs within the City of Pittsburgh. This policy establishes guidelines and procedures for the response by members of the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police to this type of incident. Additionally, this policy establishes procedures for the response to and handling of the scene of an unattended death.

2.0 PURPOSE

- 2.1 To ensure the timely and efficient investigation of incidents involving the unattended death of any person, while preserving any potential evidence of a crime until it has been determined to be something other than a criminal event;
- 2.2 To protect the dignity of persons who have died, and to attempt to lessen the effects of the death on members of the deceased person's family;
- 2.3 To ensure the timely transfer of information between the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police and the Allegheny County Office Medical Examiner's Office;
- 2.4 To ensure the proper handling of property and/or evidence in cases involving deceased persons.

3.0 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Unattended Death** – Any death that occurs outside of a medical facility, skilled nursing facility, or other care facility, and where no medical professional is on scene at the time of the death.
- 3.2 **Natural Death** – Death from apparently known and natural causes, in which a definite diagnosis can be made, either from hospital records or by the family physician that attended the deceased prior to death.
- 3.3 **Sudden Death** – Unexpected death, or occurrence of death, the cause of which is unknown (e.g. – a death where the deceased has not recently been under care of a physician, or where no illness exists).
- 3.4 **Death by Suicide** – The taking of one's own life voluntarily and intentionally.
- 3.5 **Suspicious Death** – Death with questionable circumstances (e.g. – overdoses, homicides, children/infants).
- 3.6 **Accidental Death** – Death by an unexpected occurrence.

4.0 REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR NATURAL DEATHS

- 4.1 Upon responding to the scene of an unattended death, officers shall:
 - 4.1.1 Provide immediate medical assistance if it is needed.
 - 4.1.2 Cooperate with/assist medical personnel on the scene.
 - 4.1.3 If no possibility of life exists, do not move or touch the body.
 - 4.1.4 Secure the scene.
 - 4.1.5 Notify a shift supervisor of the facts and circumstances found at the scene of the death.

- 4.1.6 Notify the Violent Crime Unit (VCU) to ensure that the Detective Bureau does not need to perform an on-scene investigation and note the name of the Detective who makes that determination.
- 4.2 When responding to the scene of an unattended death, where family members and/or next of kin are either on scene or available, the reporting officer shall:
 - 4.2.1 Attempt to determine the identity of the deceased's physician and contact the doctor to see if he/she will sign the death certificate.
 - 4.2.1.1 If the doctor agrees to sign the death certificate, the body can be released to the funeral home.
 - 4.2.1.2 If the doctor refuses to sign the death certificate, or he/she cannot be reached, the Medical Examiner's Office will be notified. The investigators from the Medical Examiner's Office will determine whether or not they will sign the death certificate and release body to the funeral home or if they will pick up the body to continue the investigation.
 - 4.2.2 Once the Medical Examiner's Office releases the body, the reporting officer will personally contact the funeral home and/or funeral director to ensure that they are en route to complete the removal of the deceased's body.
 - 4.2.3 The reporting officer will gather all of the information necessary to complete PBP Form #2.0, "Incident Report" and PBP Form #3.0, "Investigative Report". Upon completion of the report, a copy will be faxed to the appropriate Detective Unit. Refer to PBP Form #10.30, "D.O.A. Information Sheet" located in the Police Officers' Toolkit as a guide as to the information that is necessary for the reports.
 - 4.2.4 Once contact has been made with the funeral home, and arrangements have been made for the removal of the body, the reporting officer may clear the scene. The reporting officer shall document the fact that the scene was secured and the name, address and telephone number of the responsible party that was left to await the arrival of the funeral director.
- 4.3 When responding to the scene of an unattended death, where family members and/or next of kin are either NOT on scene or are NOT available, the reporting officer shall:
 - 4.3.1 Attempt to determine the name and contact information for the deceased's family and/or next of kin so that this information can be given to the Medical Examiner's Office for notification purposes.
 - 4.3.2 Notify the Medical Examiner's Office.
 - 4.3.3 Once the Medical Examiner's Office releases the body, the reporting officer will personally contact the funeral home and/or funeral director to ensure that they are en route to complete the removal of the deceased's body.
 - 4.3.4 The reporting officer will gather all of the information necessary to complete PBP Form #2.0, "Incident Report" and PBP Form #3.0, "Investigative Report". Upon completion of the report, a copy will be faxed to the appropriate Detective Unit. Refer to the PBP Form #10.30, "D.O.A. Information Sheet" as a guide as to the information that is necessary for the reports.
 - 4.3.5 The reporting officer will stay on scene until the body of the deceased is removed from the scene by either the funeral home or the Medical Examiner's Office, or until a responsible party can be identified to release the scene. If the scene is released, the reporting officer shall document the fact that the scene was secured and the name, address and telephone number of the responsible party that was left to await the arrival of the funeral director.

5.0 REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR SUDDEN, SUICIDE, AND SUSPICIOUS DEATHS

- 5.1 Upon responding to the scene of a Sudden Death, Death by Suicide, or Suspicious Death, officers shall:
 - 5.1.1 Provide immediate medical assistance if it is needed.
 - 5.1.2 Cooperate with/assist medical personnel on the scene.

- 5.1.3 If no possibility of life exists, do not move or touch the body.
- 5.1.4 Secure the scene and preserve evidence.
 - 5.1.4.1 Reporting and responding officers should not touch or move any firearms, drugs or drug-related items, or any other evidence unless there is a possibility that medical intervention may be necessary.
 - 5.1.4.2 If the responding officers find it necessary to move any evidence at the scene, they will immediately notify the responding detective and document the action on a PBP Form #8.11, "Supplemental Report".
 - 5.1.4.3 For homicide and/or potential homicide scenes:
 - 5.1.4.3.1 The initial PBP officer on scene should establish a restricted two-tiered perimeter consisting of inner and outer boundaries. The inner perimeter is the focal point of the investigation. It is the location that contains most of the evidence where detectives will concentrate the majority of their investigative efforts. The inner perimeter will be secured using red tape.
 - 5.1.4.3.2 The outer perimeter is the area uniform officers are assigned to in order to maintain a security buffer between the public and investigative personnel. The outer perimeter will be secured with yellow crime scene tape.
 - 5.1.4.3.2.1 Citizens and the media must remain on the outside of the outer perimeter.
 - 5.1.4.3.3 Supervisors will post a uniformed police officer, referred to as the Crime Scene Security Officer (CSSO) (also known as a Scribe) on the outer perimeter of all homicide crime scenes. The designated CSSO will help to regulate the movement of essential personnel into the crime scene. This officer is responsible for completing and maintaining the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police Crime Scene Log. The CSSO must record the names and times when public safety personnel and support units enter and exit the inner/outer perimeters of the crime scene, along with a brief overview of the reason for entering the restricted areas.
 - 5.1.4.3.4 All personnel who enter the crime scene, regardless of rank, must adhere to these guidelines.
 - 5.1.4.3.5 Once the crime scene is secured, the CSSO will affix his/her signature to the log along with the date and turn it over to the on-scene Major Crimes supervisor/detective. The Crime Scene Security Officer will complete a supplemental report notating the name of the Major Crimes supervisor/detective who took possession of the crime scene log.
- 5.1.5 Notify a shift supervisor of the facts and circumstances found at the scene of the death.
- 5.1.6 Detain all witnesses to the incident, keeping them separated if possible.
- 5.1.7 Take the suspect into custody if possible. Responding officers shall NOT advise the suspect of their rights or make any attempt to question them beyond gathering basic biographical information, unless directed to do so by a detective or supervisor. However, responding officers shall record all statements made by the suspect.
- 5.1.8 Notify the Violent Crime Unit (VCU) to ensure that the Detective Bureau is responding to perform an on-scene investigation and note the name of the detective(s) who will be responding.
- 5.1.9 The reporting officer will begin to gather all of the information necessary to complete PBP Form #2.0, "Incident Report" and PBP Form #3.0, "Investigative Report".
- 5.1.10 Upon arrival of Major Crimes personnel, relay all information gathered and any actions taken to them.
- 5.1.11 Render assistance as requested by VCU personnel.
- 5.1.12 If the deceased's body is to be removed by the Medical Examiner's Office, a shift supervisor will designate one or more of the responding officers to stay on scene until the deceased's body has been removed. If Major Crimes detectives and the Medical Examiner decide to release the deceased's body to a funeral home, and once contact

has been made with the funeral home arrangements have been confirmed for the removal of the body, the reporting officer may clear the scene. The Reporting Officer shall document the fact that the scene was secured and the name, address and telephone number of the responsible party that was left to await the arrival of the funeral director.

Approved By:

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Thomas A. Stangrecki". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'T'.

Thomas Stangrecki
Acting Chief of Police