

# THURMONT POLICE DEPARTMENT

**GENERAL  
ORDER**

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*Authority: Chief of Police*

*Gregory L. Eyer*

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*Subject: Notification of "Next of Kin"*

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This Directive is for internal use only, and other than as contraindicated here this Directive does not create or enlarge this Department's, governmental entity's, any of this Department's officers, and/or any other entities' civil, criminal, and/or other accountability in any way. This Directive is not to be construed as the creation of a standard of safety or care in any sense, with respect to any complaint, demand for settlement, or any other form of grievance, litigation, and/or other action. Deviations from this Directive, if substantiated, can only form the basis for intra-Departmental administrative action(s) (including discipline and/or termination).

## **I. PURPOSE:**

To furnish guidelines for personnel having to make notifications to "next of kin" of family members who are seriously ill, critically injured, or deceased.

## **II. POLICY:**

Members of the Department who must make a "next of kin" notification shall do so promptly and in person. They shall display concern and compassion and remain tactful and sensitive to the nature of the situation. The Department will make every effort to utilize a Chaplain. Proper notification will be made prior to releasing information to the media or to any other person or entity. Supervisors shall utilize their discretion in deciding whether Departmental personnel will handle notifications personally outside the jurisdiction of the Department.

## **III. DEFINITIONS:**

**CRITICAL INNJURY:** an injury which is life-threatening and likely to cause death or serious permanent disability.

**SERIOUS ILLNESS:** a sudden illness which is life-threatening and likely to cause death or serious permanent disability such as a stroke, heart attack, etc.

## **V. PROCEDURE:**

### **A. Notification by Department Member**

The following guidelines are designed for situations in which a Chaplain is not available and the Department member has to deliver the death/critical injury notice.

1. Notification will be made in person, by a team. (A female/male team is advantageous to deal with different survivors; however, if a female officer is not readily available, notification should not be delayed.) The team will take separate vehicles, and plan what will be said and by which individual prior to the notification.
2. Be sympathetic, realizing the traumatic impact that the notice will have upon the family. Ask to be admitted to the house and inform family members clearly of the information that you have. Be specific, using both the name of the victim and as much information as you have available to you. If deceased, use terminology such as "died" or "dead" as opposed to "passed away."
3. If at a work place, notification shall be made in private. It is not appropriate to divulge any details regarding the purpose of your visit to anyone other than the "next of kin."
4. Whenever possible, set up a support system utilizing a Chaplain, a neighbor, a relative, or a friend. If no support system was obtained before delivering the notice, ask if there is anyone that you can call to assist.
5. Drive the family to the hospital, if requested, or assist with travel arrangements.
6. After making the notification, remain with the "next of kin" for a reasonable amount of time, if needed, to answer any questions to the best of your ability.

### **B. Assistance to Other Agencies**

1. If the Department is requested by another law enforcement agency to perform a personal notification of a critical injury/death to a "next of kin" who resides or works in Thurmont, the same courtesy and procedures shall be afforded to the agency. The member making the notification shall provide confirmation to the requesting agency that the notification took place.

### **C. Telephone Notification**

1. Only as a last resort will a death notification be made by telephone. When a member must notify "next of kin" outside the Town limits, the member shall notify the police department having jurisdiction and request they make a personal contact with the "next of kin." The member shall supply the other police agency with as much information as possible, to include a phone number where the member can be reached by the family for any additional information/instructions. The member shall also request that the Department be provided with confirmation when the notification has taken place.

**ATTACHMENTS :**

**DOCUMENT DATES :**

*Amended Date:*

*Review Date:*

*Review Date:*

*Review Date:*

*Rescinds:*

*Order Written By: Chief Gregory L. Eyer*

*Order Edited and Approved By: Chief Gregory L. Eyer*

*Accreditation Standards Included in this Order*

*CHAPTER 55.2.6*