

**Forest Service Handbook
Service Wide - Washington Office
Washington, DC**

**Forest Service Handbook 1309.19 – Casualty Assistance Handbook
Chapter 10 – Key Employees and Response Activities**

Amendment Number: 1309.19-2024-2

Effective date: January 19, 2024

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Approved by: Antoine Dixon, Deputy Chief, Business Operations

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Responsible Staff: Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Office of Safety and Occupational Health (OSOH)

Last Change:

Superseded Document(s): 1309.19_10, Amendment 1309.19-2019-1, August 13, 2019

Digest: Following is an explanation of the changes throughout the directive by section.

Section 11.1: Changes section title from “On Scene Supervisor/Coordinator with Personnel” to “On Scene Personnel” and sets forth direction.

Section 12.3: Provides direction on the end of assignment for the Hospital Liaison.

Section 12.5: Removes direction on Care Team and replaces with “Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Coordinator” direction previously set out at 12.6.

Section 13.1: Changes section title from “Investigations” to “Care Team” and sets forth direction. for Unit Line Office delegation of Authority; Establishes direction for invitational Family Travel.

Section 13.2: Establishes code, caption, and sets forth direction for “Forest Service Honor Guard.”

Section 13.3: Establishes code, caption, and sets forth direction for “Investigations” previously set out at 13.1.

Section 13.4: Establishes code, caption, and sets forth direction for Incident Management Team or Modified Incident Management Organization previously set out at 13.2.

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Effective August 13, 2019. Revisions as listed below to FSH 1309.19, chapter 10:

Section 10: Revises chapter in its entirety. Incorporates responsibilities for key employees' coordination activities from FSH 1309.19, chapter 20, Key Employees' Coordination Activities and sets forth direction.

Section 11: Establishes code and caption for role of Unit Safety Manager and sets forth direction.

Section 12: Removes direction on the "First 3 Hours Following the Initial Incident".

Section 12.5: Establishes code and caption for Care Teams and sets forth direction.

Section 13.1 – 13.2: Establishes code, caption, and direction on Investigations and an Incident Management Team.

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The level of the Forest Service response is determined by the severity of the incident and immediate needs of the employee and/or immediate family, on behalf of the employee. Specific casualty assistance guidelines and duties for key employee positions are described in this section.

The duties and responsibilities related to responding to a casualty may take priority over normal official duties, until such time the incident response and follow-up is completed, as determined by the affected unit.

With assistance from the Regional Casualty Assistance Program Managers, Unit Line Officers identify and approve personnel to fill roles and tasks that are needed immediately following an incident. Verbiage included in this guidance is singular and it is understood that more than one employee may be affected. Actual response, assignments and follow-up actions correspond accordingly.

11 – Initial Response

11.1 - On Scene Personnel

The on-scene personnel assess and meets the immediate medical needs of the affected person and ensures appropriate safety measures and/or criminal investigations are taken at the scene.

11.2 - Dispatch

Dispatch maintains control of the incident and assists on-scene personnel to ensure immediate and appropriate medical and law enforcement response in cooperation with the unit's chain of command.

11.3 - Notification Officer

The Notification Officer informs the family of the condition or death of the employee. Notifications are to be expedient and factual. The Notification Officer shall be a uniformed Forest Service employee and/or law enforcement official and the notification should be made in person, if possible.

11.4 - Public Information Officer

A Public Information Officer (PIO) is assigned to manage the incident by facilitating internal and external communications to provide accurate, timely, and respectful information that is aligned with agency policy, and in coordination with the family members. PIO's must work with local jurisdictional law enforcement and the Washington Office, Region, Station, or area to clearly define the protocol for verifying, approving, and releasing information to authorized interested parties. Refer to FSM Chapter 1650, Press, Radio, and Television for more roles and responsibilities.

11.5 - Unit Safety Manager

The Unit Safety Manager works closely with the Regional Casualty Assistance Program Manager, local Unit Line Officers, Law Enforcement and Investigations, the Office of the General Counsel, Occupational Safety and Health Administration, the Coordinated Response Protocol Team Lead, and/or cooperating agencies on related safety matters.

12 - First 24 Hours Following the Initial Incident

12.1 - Workers' Compensation Coordinator

Human Resources Management (HRM) Workers' Compensation Coordinators provide the information required to file a claim with the Department of Labor, Office of Workers Compensation (DOLOWCP) to facilitate and assist the employee or designated family representative with the claims process. Coordinators have direct contact with the injured worker whenever possible, to serve as the injured workers' single point of contact for advice and liaison to DOLOWCP. If the injured worker is unable to make direct contact with HRM-Workers' Compensation, a designated representative can act on their behalf.

12.2 - Benefits Coordinator

HRM Benefits Coordinators provide information to Forest Service management and Family Liaison regarding benefits available and the process each benefit entails. Coordinators work closely with the Family Liaison and maintain contact with the family until benefit issues are resolved.

12.3 - Hospital Liaison

A Hospital Liaison shall be assigned, at the discretion of the line officer when an employee suffers a serious injury resulting from a work-related activity. The Hospital Liaison coordinates the arrival of the immediate family members, Forest Service personnel, the media, and others at the hospital. This liaison works closely with and ensures HRM-Workers Compensation and HRM-Benefits have been notified.

The Hospital Liaison does not make decisions but acts as a facilitator between the family and the Forest Service and has direct access (outside the chain of command) with Forest Service officials necessary to accomplish their role. The Hospital Liaison assignment generally ends when the employee is discharged from the hospital and in a safe environment and a HRM Workers' Compensation Coordinator has been assigned and in contact with injured employee or representative.

12.4 - Family Liaison

A Family Liaison shall be assigned, at the discretion of the line officer when an employee dies. The role of the Family Liaison is a critical assignment, and it may be appropriate to assign multiple employees to serve as Family Liaisons. Assigned individuals should have the ability to develop a relationship with the family, demonstrate empathy, communicate with tact, and respect and provide emotional support. The assigned employees must also be able to provide support without causing undue stress and hardship on the family or themselves.

12.5 – Critical Incident Stress Management Coordinator

A Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support Coordinator works with the Unit Line Officer to determine the appropriate response to support employees following a critical incident. Critical incidents are usually sudden, powerful events that are outside of the normal range of a person's ordinary experiences. These events may cause unusually strong reactions and can interfere with the person's ability to work safely or function normally. Examples of a critical incident may be but not limited to an aviation or motor vehicle accident, co-worker's line of duty death, or an incident perceived as either physically or psychologically threatening.

13 - Beyond 24 Hours

13.1 – Care Team

Care Teams are established to centralize support immediately, alleviate the unit's administrative workload, coordinate key activities, and may provide support to multiple locations. Care Teams are comprised of subject matter experts who serve as advisors to the affected unit and are mobilized when the complexity of the casualty incident exceeds the unit's capacity to manage the event. The Unit Line Officer may issue a Delegation of Authority to the Care Team Lead that specifies responsibilities, such as managing the activities associated with transporting the deceased, coordinating the paperwork associated with death or injury, and planning a ceremony.

Care Teams generally consist of the following representatives:

Care Team Lead: A subject matter expert on Agency policy, procedures, and resources that provides direction, coordinates tasks, and identifies action items in support of affected unit and family.

Unit Line or Staff Officer: The highest-ranking Line Officer in the chain of command for a specific jurisdiction Ref: FSM Chapter 1230.6, Delegations of Authority and Responsibility.

Incident Management Team Members: This could be an Incident Management Team, modified Incident Management Team, Incident Business Advisors, or local resources; Care Team may include the Incident Commander and a Finance Section Chief or other Finance Representative.

Family Liaison: The assigned representative(s) who serves as a conduit between the affected unit and the family of a deceased employee.

Hospital Liaison: The assigned representative(s) who serves as a conduit between the affected unit and the family of an injured employee.

Funeral/Memorial Liaison: Acts as facilitator between a deceased employee's family and the Agency during the wake, funeral, and memorial services. Communication and coordination with the family is done in conjunction with the Family Liaison.

Unit Administrative Liaison: A designated local point-of-contact who facilitates communication between the local Supervisor and HRM Workers' Compensation and Benefits Coordinators.

HRM Benefits Coordinator: Provides information to Forest Service Unit Line Officers and the Family Liaison related to available benefits and processes.

HRM Workers' Compensation Coordinator: Facilitates and assists an employee or designated representative with the Department of Labor, Office of Workers' Compensation Program claims process.

B&F Travel Operations Branch Coordinator: Coordinates invitational family travel, if necessary.

Honor Guard Lead: Provides guidance and coordinates Honor Guard and/or Honor Watch activities, if requested.

Aviation Officer: Obtains cost estimates and coordinates use of Government aircraft, as appropriate, for the transportation of injured employees, non-federal travelers, and remains.

Law Enforcement: Coordinates all law enforcement related activities as needed.

Public Affairs/Public Information Officer: Manages the incident by facilitating internal and external communications to provide accurate, timely, and respectful information.

Critical Incident Stress Management Peer Support Coordinator: Coordinates crisis intervention peer support for affected employees.

13.2 – Forest Service Honor Guard

The Honor Guard serves a critically important role in honoring the loss of Forest Service employees, cooperators, and retirees. Honor Guard members may perform at funerals or memorial ceremonies, plan and coordinate the dignified transportation of employee remains, and escort family members preceded by an official request and approval.

13.3 - Investigations

On behalf of the Chief, the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official will consider the circumstances and may appoint a Chief's level investigation team for work-related accidents involving employee fatalities and for other serious accidents. Reviews of fatalities, other serious accidents, or near misses may be delegated to Regional Foresters and Station, Area, and Institute Directors at the Designated Agency Safety and Health Official's discretion.

Reporting and review must be in accordance with FSM Chapter 5720 Aviation Safety Program and Title 29 Code of Federal Regulations part 1960.29 Accident Investigations, the Facilitated Learning Analysis Guidebook, the Coordinated Response Protocol Guidebook, the Learning Review Guidebook, and FSM Chapter 6730 Accident Reporting and Investigation.

13.4 - Incident Management Team or Modified Incident Management Organization

The Incident Command System can be adapted to meet the complexity and demands of a variety of incidents, and it is common to modify the traditional command and general staff organization during fatality incidents. If an Incident Management Team or National Incident Management Organization is requested, the Incident Commander will work directly with the Unit Line Officer and Care Team Lead to manage the planning of a memorial ceremony honoring the deceased employee.