



Guidelines & Protocols

Protocol/Guideline Title: Supervisors Checklist for Handling a Death of an Employee		
Responsible Office: Human Resources		
Date Approved by President's Council: 2/22/2011		
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The following is not official university policy but rather a guideline used to facilitate the internal actions of the University or a particular unit within the University. Guidelines are not binding on the University and may be amended by the University at any time. A guideline, such as the one to follow, does not establish any contractual rights or obligations between the University and any individual.



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Executive Summary

This document outlines a formal University-wide plan for supervisory action upon the death of an employee.

Related University Policies

UVU Policy 204 *Appropriateness of Expenditures*

Response Protocols for Deaths/Serious Illnesses Occurring At Work

If death (or serious accident/illness) occurs at work, the immediate supervisor of the employee will:

- Call 911 or Campus Police at 801-863-5555;
- Notify Human Resources at extension 8241 or 6595;
- Call employee's emergency contact person (HR will provide the contact person's name and phone number if you do not have the information), or other known family member to advise of employee's being taken to the hospital;
- Contact his or her next level supervisor (i.e., manager, director, dean, associate vice president);
- Have a supervisor travel to hospital to meet family, if necessary;
- Upon an employee's death, notify remaining employees and indicate that details will be provided when available;
- Be sensitive to family—ask for the name of a contact person who can provide funeral details when known, answer questions about the family's wishes, and arrange for benefits procedures to be completed when appropriate;
- Designate an internal contact person for employees who have any questions or concerns to prevent employees from trying to contact the family directly;
- Follow existing internal procedures regarding contact with the media;
- Notification of the employee death to areas outside of the department/unit but within the division will be determined and communicated by the appropriate cabinet-level officer;
- In the case of a high-profile employee, the cabinet-level officer may recommend to the President that a notification of the employee's death be sent to the broader university community and that the official UVU floral arrangement be sent. Funding for the UVU floral arrangement will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Human Resources will contact:

- The President's Office;
- Appropriate vice president(s);
- Any other pertinent employee/leader in the supervisory line;
- Marketing and Communications;



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- Risk Management.

Note: The President's Office will send notification to University Leadership Council.

Response Protocols For Deaths/Serious Illnesses Occurring Outside of Work

If death (or serious accident/illness) occurs at work, the immediate supervisor of the employee will:

- Notify Human Resources at extension 8241 or 6595;
- Contact his or her next level supervisor (i.e., unit supervisor, director, dean, associate vice-president, etc.);
- Notify remaining employees, indicating details will be provided when available;
- Be sensitive to family—ask for the name of a contact person who can provide funeral details when known, answer questions about the family's wishes and arrange for benefits procedures to be completed when appropriate;
- The appropriate cabinet-level officer will designate an internal contact person for employees who have any questions or concerns to prevent employees from trying to contact the family directly;
- Follow existing internal procedures regarding contact with the media;
- Notification of the employee death to areas outside of the department/unit but within the division will be determined and communicated by the appropriate cabinet level officer;
- In the case of a high-profile employee, the cabinet-level officer may recommend to the President that a notification of the employee's death be sent to the broader University community and that the official UVU floral arrangement be sent. Funding for the UVU floral arrangement will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Human Resources will contact:

- The President's Office
- Appropriate Vice President(s) Any other pertinent employee/leader in the supervisory line;
- Marketing and Communications.

Note: The President's Office will send notification to University Leadership Council.

Handling Arrangements

If an employee dies or suffers from a serious accident or illness, the employee's department should:

- If appropriate, send flowers with funds from their budgets based upon University rules set forth in UVU Policy 204 *Appropriateness of Expenditures*. Please read these sections for information regarding the death of an employee's spouse, parent or employee's child.
- Arrange to redirect phone, voicemail, email and mail communications.
- Plan for counseling for employees through the University's employee assistance program (EAP) provider or Student Health Services immediately, if needed.
- In consultation with HR, work with grieving employees to arrange for appropriate time



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off as needed--immediately if they witnessed the death.

- Begin termination processing following normal procedures (see benefits section below).
- Have designated contact person keep track of all notes, flowers, etc. that arrive following the death so they can be responded to and collected for the family.

After the Funeral/Follow Up

For benefit-eligible employees, Human Resources will:

- Contact and schedule time to meet with beneficiaries;
- Locate beneficiary designations for all benefits;
- Confirm state law regarding final pay for deceased employees and associated tax issues and comply promptly with all rules;
- Treat accrued but unused vacation, sick, personal days, etc. in accordance with state law and University policy;
- Determine how many certified death certificates will be needed to process benefits paperwork including: life insurance, accidental death and dismemberment, and other benefits programs;
- Communicate to family any actions required for the pension payout;
- Determine Workers Compensation death benefits, if applicable;
- Terminate health insurance according to practice;
- Determine balance of health care flexible spending account—for health expenses prior to date of death – notify family of procedure;
- Handle COBRA paperwork for spouse/dependents;
- Follow normal termination checklists to ensure all equipment, keys, credit cards, etc., are returned and security issues are addressed.
- Along with the employee's department, will keep in touch with the employee's family, as appropriate.

Planning for Funeral/Memorial Service

- While adhering to UVU's Policy 204 *Appropriateness of Expenditures*, determine where flowers may be sent according to family's wishes.
- Donations other than flowers may not be made according to University policy. If individuals and departments within the University wish to make appropriate gestures of sympathy to the families at the time of death they are welcome to do so at their own expense.



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- Contact Development and Alumni Relations regarding the setup of a memorial fund or scholarship.
- Consider the impact to the University regarding employee time off, however, recognize that many employees may feel a need to attend the service (See *Helping Employees Handle the Loss of a Co-worker* below).

University Benefits Coverage

The University practice regarding benefits coverage for the deceased employee's beneficiaries is as follows:

- Benefit coverage extends one month from the date of death;
- Pay extends one month from the date of death (for faculty, one month equals faculty days of service based on the academic calendar);
- A \$50,000 life insurance policy paid out to primary beneficiary;
- Vacation balance are paid out on the final paycheck for full-time staff (faculty do not accrue vacation leave);
- Benefits are tracked through normal University payroll processes.

Part-time, non-benefit eligible employees will receive any final pay through the regular payroll process.

Helping Employees Handle the Loss of a Co-worker

Some important things to consider:

- While it is important that employees are notified promptly of a co-worker's death, it is also important that the supervisor carefully plan what to say.
- It is reasonable to expect that many, if not all, employees who worked with the deceased will be unable to complete their work the day of the announcement. This reaction should be anticipated and arrangements should be made, in consultation with HR, to allow those who need time off to receive it. Human Resources and the supervisor will work together to account for any time off and how it may be compensated.
- It is important that those who desire to attend funeral/memorial services may be allowed to do so. This may require a department-wide closedown for a period of time, typically no longer than a morning or afternoon. The department leader should arrange for office coverage if this is the case.
- The supervisor should mention the EAP to employees in the days following their co-worker's death. (*Contact Human Resources regarding the EAP services.*) Be sensitive to the fact that



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many co-workers may have known the deceased on a personal level, and their grief may affect their behavior and performance.

- In most situations, the employee will have personal belongings at work. It may be difficult for co-workers to see these items removed. Make arrangements for a member of the employee's family to collect those items after a respectable amount of time has passed. Arrange to have boxes and packing materials available.
- Lastly, replacing the deceased too quickly may make co-workers feel that the University did not value the contributions the deceased made. Consider having someone fill in on a temporary basis or leaving the position open for a while.
- Employees may have a hard time using the deceased employee's desk or office – consider other uses for this space, if possible.

Sample Letter of Condolence to Family of Deceased Employee

The following is a sample of an appropriate letter of condolence to the family of a deceased employee. Great care and thought should be taken to compose a letter that is sincere and appropriately recognizes the employee's contribution to the University.

Dear _____:

Although we realized that *(name of employee)* was seriously ill *(or critically injured)*, we were deeply saddened to learn of *(his or her)* death. The professional and personal relationship we had with *(name of employee)* has been a source of enrichment and enjoyment to all of us. We shall miss *(name of employee)* greatly.

(Name of employee) was held in the highest regard by our employees and by many others with whom he or she worked. *(He or she)* set an example that will continue to be an inspiration to us all. Please accept our sincere sympathy for your loss.

Human Resources will be sending you benefit information shortly or you may call them directly for immediate attention at 801-863-8389 or 801-863-8704. In the meantime, please call me at *(your telephone number)* if you have any questions or if we may be of assistance.

Sincerely,

(Your name & title)

Related Forms

Not applicable.