

Standard Operating Procedure

Casualty Notification

TXSG SOP 1510.10
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Texas State Guard (TXSG)
PO Box 5218
Austin, TX 78763

OPR: Texas State Guard Chaplain



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Summary. This SOP provides guidance for Officers and Chaplains in the TXSG to perform Casualty notification to NOK and SNOK.

Applicability. This SOP applies to all components of TXSG.

Management Control Process. NA.

Proponent and Exception Authority. The proponent for this SOP is the Chaplain, Texas State Guard. The proponent has the authority to approve exceptions to this SOP that are consistent with controlling law and regulation.

Supplementation. Supplementation of this SOP or establishment of command and local forms on Casualty Notification is prohibited without prior approval from the Commanding General (TXSG), through the Chaplain, Texas State Guard P.O. Box 5218, Austin, TX 78763-5218.

Suggested Improvements. Users are invited to send comments and suggested improvements concerning this SOP directly to the Chaplain of the Texas State Guard P.O. Box 5218, Austin, TX 78763-5218.

Distribution. A

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Chapter 1

1. General

1.1. Purpose

1.1.1. This guidance establishes standard operating procedures (SOP) when TXSG casualties are sustained. A casualty is defined as any person who is lost to the organization by having been declared dead. This directive is effective immediately.

1.1.2. This SOP covers Casualty notification for Service members on active duty, during command sponsored training, or who are performing duty in an area of operations that are entitled to official notification and assistance to the next of kin (NOK).

1.1.3. To ensure Commanders communicate to Soldiers and Civilian employees that they do not release any information concerning a casualty until after the initial notification has been completed.

1.2. References See Appendix A.

1.3. Explanation of Abbreviations and Terms See Glossary.

1.4. Responsibilities

1.4.1.1. The Commanding General of the TXSG (CG, TXSG). Serves as the senior official on matters concerning exceptions to this regulation.

1.4.1.2. The TXSG Chief of Staff will provide a briefing to the Casualty Notification Officer.

1.4.1.2.1. Provides guidance and policy clarification

1.4.1.2.2. Primary Point of Contact for Casualty Notification to the TXSG CG's Office.

1.4.1.3. The TXSG Chaplain. Serves as the senior TXSG policy official for all Chaplaincy readiness of the TXSG.

1.4.1.3.1. Provides oversight, support and direction to all components of the TXSG with a direct report to TXSG Headquarters.

1.4.1.3.2. Acts as a liaison between TXSG Headquarters and all components.

1.4.1.3.3. Provides policy oversight and guidance to standards.

Chapter 2

2. Notification Guide: Casualty Notification Officer & Chaplain

2.1. Selection

2.1.1. You have been selected by your Texas State Guard (TXSG) commander to perform casualty notification duties for: _____.

2.2. Preparation

2.2.1. You are about to embark on what will be one of the most difficult duties you will be called upon to perform in your military career. **You represent the TXSG Commanding General, Texas Adjutant General, and the Governor of Texas.** Your duty as a Casualty Notification Officer (CNO) has priority over all other duties. This guide will provide enough information to assist you in preparing and completing a casualty notification and ease some of the anxiety often experienced by individuals when called upon to perform this sensitive task. Your duties as a CNO are designed to soften the "blow", if possible, and to show the Texas State Guard is genuinely concerned with its personnel and their families. Every notification is unique as a result of the individuals involved and the circumstances surrounding the incident. You must convey in every action and deed, the sincere concern of the TXSG for the feelings of the next of kin (NOK). Being prepared, sincere, and alert to the needs of the NOK at the time of notification will reduce some of the shock that is normal under these circumstances. Remember, nothing can substitute for common sense, good judgment and sensitivity in making a casualty notification. The following information will help you during the pre-notification phase and in performing the actual notification:

- 2.2.1.1. The NOK will be notified promptly in an appropriate, dignified and understanding manner by a uniformed service representative. You will wear the Class A uniform and present a soldierly appearance when making notification.
- 2.2.1.2. The TXSG's policy is to make personal notification to the primary next of kin (PNOK) and secondary next of kin (SNOK) of the deceased soldier within 4 hours after notification of the death. Notification should take place during the hours from 0600 to 2200 local time unless otherwise directed. The time limits established for notification may have to be adjusted due to distances involved or other conditions, such as adverse weather. All attempts will be made to notify the PNOK first, if your efforts to contact the PNOK are unsuccessful, then contact the Chief of Staff, TXSG (CoS) immediately for guidance.
- 2.2.1.3. Learn as much as you can about the casualty, the NOK, and the circumstances surrounding the incident.
- 2.2.1.4. The CoS or his designee will provide the name, relationship and address of the NOK you will be notifying and any special conditions you should be aware of (if known).

- 2.2.1.5. Have on hand the name and telephone number of the local hospital, local ambulance service and fire department rescue squad.
- 2.2.1.6. Memorize the script you will use in paragraph 5b (below).

2.3. Locating the Next of Kin

- 2.3.1. Locating the NOK –
 - 2.3.1.1. Utilizing the last known address of the NOK, proceed to the residence of the NOK.
 - 2.3.1.2. Familiarize yourself with the location of the NOK. If the NOK resides within an area that you deem unsafe, request a police escort (the TXSG - COS can assist with the request).
 - 2.3.1.3. Make your visit as inconspicuous as possible without calling undue attention to the unusual presence of the military.
 - 2.3.1.4. Inability to locate the NOK –
 - 2.3.1.4.1. If it appears the NOK is not at home, don't park in front of the residence and wait for their return. Use caution and do not disclose the full purpose of your mission except to the NOK. The preferred place of notification is at the NOK's residence.
 - 2.3.1.4.2. If you are unable to locate the NOK or the NOK has moved from the immediate area, don't leave the local area. Immediately telephone the TXSG - COS Office for instructions.

2.4. Meeting the Next of Kin

- 2.4.1. Identify yourself to the NOK; for example: **"I am Captain Sam Robinson from 2nd Battalion, of the Texas State Guard, Camp Mabry, Austin, Texas"**
- 2.4.2. Ensure you are speaking to the correct person(s). For example, **"Are you Mr. Tommy L. Jones? Are you the father of Sergeant Robert L. Jones"?**
 - 2.4.2.1. If at least one person to be notified is home, state that you have an important message to deliver and ask permission to enter the residence. For example, **"I have an important message to deliver from the TXSG Commanding General's office, may I come in, Mr. Jones?"**

2.5. Notification

- 2.5.1. Do not hurry, be as natural as possible in speech, manner, and method of delivery.
- 2.5.2. Convey one of the following scripts to the NOK (without reading from script):
 - 2.5.2.1. For death cases: **"The Commanding General, Texas State Guard, has asked me to express their deep regret that your (relationship; son, Robert or husband, Edward; etc.) (died/was**

killed in the line of duty) in (location/city/state) on (date). (State the circumstances provided by the CG's Office.) The Commanding General extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family in your tragic loss.

- 2.5.2.2. For missing cases: **"The Commanding General has asked me to inform you that your (relationship; son, John or daughter, Janet; etc.) has been reported Missing in (location/city/state) since (date). (State the circumstances provided by the CG's Office.) When we receive more information, you will be promptly notified. The Commanding General extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family during this trying period."**
- 2.5.2.3. For deaths - positive identification not complete: **" The Commanding General has asked me to express his deep regret that your (Relationship of deceased to NOK - son, daughter, husband) is believed to (have died) or (been killed) on (date of death), at (location). A body matching (Soldiers Name) description was found in (location). Cause of death at this time is under investigation. The local authorities are currently trying to establish positive identification. You will be notified as soon as identification has been established. The Commanding General extends his deepest sympathy to you and your family during this trying period".**
- 2.5.3. Do not extend overly sympathetic gestures that may be taken the wrong way. Use good judgment by not passing gory or embarrassing details.
- 2.5.3.1. **IMPORTANT!** Do not physically become overly engaged with the NOK in any manner (other than a heartfelt touch of a shoulder or holding a hand) unless there is shock or fainting. Summon medical assistance immediately, if necessary.
- 2.5.3.2. Be alert to any adverse reaction to the news. If there are no other adult members of the family at home and the news produces a shock, it may be helpful for someone to be with the next of kin. If so, ask, "Is there anything I can do?" or "May I call someone or ask a neighbor to step in to assist?"
- 2.5.3.3. Ensure the NOK is informed of the following –
- 2.5.3.3.1. In death cases, advise the PNOK that the TXSG and State of Texas has benefits and allowances available under Workman's Compensation and they may ask for description and explanation of these benefits while making any decisions on care and preparation of the remains. At this time provide a copy of information for the State Worker's Compensation contact/office. [Summary sheet of workers compensation benefits should be included in the packet of information given to the PKOK]*
- 2.5.3.3.2. You need to verify the NOK's complete name, telephone number, and a 45-day mailing address at this time. (Complete the attached TXSG FORM 9 (Record of Casualty Notification Actions).

- 2.5.3.3.3. They will be contacted within 24 hours by a representative of the Commanding General, who will arrange for a personal visit at their convenience (PNOK only).
- 2.5.3.3.4. Personal notification will be made to the SNOK.
- 2.5.3.3.5. In order to improve the timeliness of NOK notification and reduce notification efforts, the CNO should validate with the notified NOK other NOK address information listed on the casualty's TXSG Form 9 (Record of Casualty Notifications Actions). If discrepancies are noted the CNO should pass the information to the CoS's Office immediately. These actions could preclude another CNO from going to a wrong/outdated address.
- 2.5.3.3.6. A letter, or email which will give more details, will be coming from the soldier's commander.
- 2.5.3.3.7. They will receive a letter confirming the information you have passed.
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1. Information you **should not** discuss –
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1.1. Specific questions on subjects, such as insurance, death gratuity, final pay, autopsies or investigations, etc. If asked, advise the NOK that the Chief of Staff's Office will discuss these subjects with the PNOK.
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1.2. Details on mortuary affairs.
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1.3. Personal effects of the soldier.
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1.4. Questions relating to line of duty, neglect, errors of judgment or the responsibility of other personnel concerned with the incident.
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1.5. Your prior experiences or personal conjecture.
 - 2.5.3.3.7.1.6. In short, limit your discussion to information contained in the message you delivered and **DO NOT DISCUSS MATTERS THAT YOU ARE NOT QUALIFIED TO DISCUSS.**

2.6. Departure

- 2.6.1. Ensure the attached TXSG Form 9 (Record of Casualty Notification Actions) is completed.
- 2.6.2. Stay with the NOK as long as needed, but depart the residence professionally, as soon as possible.
- 2.6.3. Announce your departure from the residence, for example, "**Mr. Jones, I must be returning to Camp Mabry, again, on behalf of the Commanding General, please accept the Texas State Guard's deepest condolences.**"

2.7. After the Notification

- 2.7.1. Immediately, after departure from the residence **and before returning home**, telephone the TXSG – CoS's Office and advise them of:
 - 2.7.1.1. Time of notification.

- 2.7.1.2. Confirmed address.
- 2.7.1.3. Home telephone number(s) where NOK can be contacted.
- 2.7.1.4. Any unusual events or comments by the NOK.
- 2.7.1.5. Notify the CoS's Office of any NOK address changes that may affect other notification actions.
- 2.7.1.6. Upon return, immediately - provide the completed TXSG Form 9 to the TXSG - CoS 's Office

2.8. Final Comments

- 2.8.1. This guide is not intended to replace or circumvent existing regulations. However, this guide should serve as a beneficial tool in facilitating casualty notifications.
- 2.8.2. It is understandable that, for both the "first time" and the "experienced notification officer", there will be a certain degree of reluctance and anxiety. Your anxiety can be somewhat reduced by being well prepared, by maintaining close communication with the TXSG – CoS's Office, and, as earlier mentioned, use common sense and good judgment.

Figure 2.1 Phone Directory

**DIRECTORY
EMERGENCY DIAL "911"**

TXSG CoS's Office	1-512.782.5720
Public Affairs Office.....	1-512.782.5101
Hospital (Emergency).....	911
Sheriff Department.....	911
Police Department.....	911
Chaplain's Office.....	1-512.782.5101
Red Cross.....	1-877-272-7337

Figure 2.2 Briefing Checklist

CASUALTY NOTIFICATION OFFICER BRIEFING CHECKLIST

Prior to dispatching a Casualty Notification Officer (CNO), to perform the difficult duties of notifying a next of kin (NOK), he/she should be briefed on the following major subjects.

1. Uniform
2. Transportation,- Official State vehicle use must be requested through TXSG T4, otherwise CNO will utilize their POV.
3. Casualty Notification Script
4. Chaplain
5. Notification standards
6. Notification information
7. TXSG Form 9 (Record of Casualty Notification Actions)
 - 7.1. Immediately, upon return, provide the completed form to the TXSG CoS's Office
8. Actions required after notification
9. Verify the address of the PNOK and SNOK.
10. Report to CoS's Office

Signature of Notifier

Date

Signature of Briefer

Date

Figure 2.3 Record of Notification Actions

RECORD OF CASUALTY NOTIFICATION ACTIONS TXSG FORM 9, For use with TXSG Casualty Notification Guide		
1a. NAME OF DECEASED (Last, First, Middle)	1b. GRADE/RANK	1c. SSN
1d. COMPONENT/UNIT /LOCATION		
1e. DATE OF DEATH	1f. PLACE OF DEATH	
1g. DATE OF BIRTH	1h. PLACE OF BIRTH (City, State or Country)	
1i. CAUSE / CIRCUMSTANCES		
2a. DATE OF NOTIFICATION	2b. PLACE OF NOTIFICATION	
2c. NAME OF PNOK (Last, First, Middle)	2d. SSN	2e. RELATIONSHIP
2f. DOB	2g. TELEPHONE	2h. CONFIRMED ADDRESS
3a. DATE AND TIME OF NOTIFICATION	3b. PLACE OF NOTIFICATION	
3c. NAME OF SNOK (Last, First, Middle)	3d. SSN/ID	3e. RELATIONSHIP
3f. DOB	3g. TELEPHONE	3h. CONFIRMED ADDRESS
4a. DATE AND TIME OF NOTIFICATION	4b. PLACE OF IDENTIFICATION	
4c. NAME OF <u>OTHER</u> NOK (Last, First, Middle)	4d. SSN/ID	4e. RELATIONSHIP
4f. DOB	4g. TELEPHONE	4h. CONFIRMED ADDRESS
5a. NAME (Last, First, Middle) ADDRESS AND SSN OF EACH CHILD	5b. PERSON WITH WHOM CHILD RESIDES, AND RELATIONSHIP TO CHILD (NOK, OTHER)	5c. CHILDS DATE OF BIRTH

<p>6. Ensure the following is communications to the Primary Next of Kin (PNOK) prior to departure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Communication will be sent to the PNOK and SNOK residing in the Continental United States (CONUS) verifying the information you have provided them. b. A Casualty Assistance Officer (CAO) will contact them within 24 hours to arrange a personal visit at their convenience (PNOK Only). c. A representative of the Texas Military Forces will provide the PNOK information on any benefits that might be available. <p>7. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (CAO will collect supporting documentation)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. WAS CASUALTY EVER DIVRCED? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No b. WERE THERE HEALTH PROBLEMS NOTED? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No c. WERE ANY LANGUAGE BARRIERS WITH NOK? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <p>PRINCIPAL LANGUAGE IF OTHER THAN ENGLISH: _____</p> <p>8. After departure from the residence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Immediately call the CoS office, telephone: 512-782-6595 to relay the notification has been completed. b. Upon return, immediately provide this completed form to the CoS office. 		
<p>9. LIST QUESTION THE NOK MAY HAVE</p>		
<p>10. COMMENTS</p>		
11a. NAME OF CASUALTY NOTIFIER	11b. RANK	11c. COMPONENT
11d. PHONE	11a. CELL PHONE	11f. SIGNATURE

TXSG FORM 9 effective 8/2019

Appendix A – References

1. Notification Guide, “Casualty Notification Officer & Chaplain”, January 2019.
2. USACC “Casualty Standard Operating Procedure”, June 2016
3. US Army “Casualty Notification Officer Module”, 2012

Glossary

AAR After action report
AG Adjutant General
ANOK Adult next of kin
ARC American Red Cross
CAO Casualty assistance officer
CAS Casualty
CDR Commander
CMD Command
CNO Casualty notification officer
CONUS Continental United States
ETA Estimated time of arrival
ETD Estimated time
IAW In accordance with
ID Identification
KIA Killed in action
LOC Letter of condolence
LOD Line of duty
LOS Letter of sympathy
MIA Missing in action
NA Not applicable
NCO Noncommissioned officer
NCOIC Noncommissioned officer in charge
NSI Not seriously wounded, injured, or ill
NOK Next of kin
OCONUS Outside continental United States
OIC Officer in charge
PAO Public affairs officer
PID Positive identification
NOK Primary next of kin
POB Place of birth
SI Seriously wounded, injured, or ill
SNOK Secondary next of kin
TAG The Adjutant General
VSI Very seriously wounded, injured, or ill