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June 1, 2015

MEMORANDUM FOR DLA EXECUTIVE BOARD

SUBJECT: Guidance – Employee Death in Service

As we continue to take steps to bolster and fortify the resilience of our workforce, one particularly sensitive area is how the agency deals with the death in service of a DLA employee. While this is thankfully a rare occurrence, the death of a team member is a significant and stressful event for co-workers and friends. DLA organizations that experience a loss of a team member will face a number of sensitive issues, and this guidance is designed to address questions that supervisors, managers, and employees may have about their roles and responsibilities regarding the family, staff, and others.

In addition to the DLA Instruction that addresses the topic (DLAI 6105, "Notification for Serious Illness, Injury, or Death of Civilian Employees," found at https://hqc.dla.mil/issuances/Documents/i6105.pdf), J1 has developed the attached toolkit with standardized guidance to assist organizations dealing with the death of an employee. Attachment 1 is guidance that provides an orderly and consistent approach for supervisors to follow during these difficult circumstances. Attachment 2 is a Supervisory Checklist covering the necessary steps a supervisor must take after such an event. Attachment 3 is designed to provide employees guidance on steps they can and should take to ensure their family members have the necessary information (e.g., points of contact, benefits forms) in the unfortunate event of their own death. The attachments are available at:

https://eworkplace.dla.mil/sites/S8/Pages/toolkit----death-of-DLA-employee.aspx.

This is a useful site for supervisors and managers to bookmark for easy access should they face a loss in their organizations. For additional assistance or more information, please contact Mr. Mike Wlazlak, DSN 771-5478 or email: michael.wlazlak@dla.civ or your DLA Human Resources Customer Account Manager.

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Brad Bunn
Director
DLA Human Resources

Attachments:
1. What To Do When an Employee Dies in Service
2. Supervisory Checklist
3. Employee Information

DLA Guidance for Supervisors & Managers
What to Do When an Employee Dies In Service

The following guidance establishes a standardized enterprise process in the event an employee dies in service. Employees working in offices who have lost a staff member may experience a number of feelings over the days and weeks after the event. Strong personal bonds are often formed within work groups, and the experience of grieving a coworker's death can be profound.

Offices which have recently experienced a loss are presented with a number of issues. There may be difficulties with productivity and attendance for those most affected by the loss. Decisions about the employee's possessions, workspace and job responsibilities will have to be made; it is important that these decisions are made with sensitivity for all those affected. Acknowledging and discussing the impact of the loss can help with the process.

In these unfortunate circumstances, supervisors and managers are left with questions about what their roles and responsibilities are to the family, staff, and enterprise. This guidance provides an orderly and consistent approach for supervisors to follow during this most stressful event.

What do I do upon learning of the loss of a civilian employee?

The first step is to review the DLA Instruction 6105, Notification for Serious Illness, Injury, or Death of Civilian Employees at this link, https://hqc.dla.mil/issuances/Documents/i6105.pdf. This policy establishes a systematic process for providing notification and assistance in matters related to serious illness, injury, or death of civilian employees. DLA activities have an important responsibility to provide assistance and counsel to employees, their families, or designated next of kin in connection with the serious illness, injury, or death of an employee whether it occurs on or off the job.

When do I contact DLA Human Resources and what happens after I do?

You should immediately contact your Customer Account Manager (CAM) at the DLA Human Resources Services (DHRS) for assistance in providing information to the deceased employee’s family, or designated next of kin regarding benefits, entitlements, and responsibilities (https://employees.hr.dla.mil/contactus/). It should be noted the DHRS cannot provide Management/Supervisors with family members, designation of beneficiary, or next of kin information due to privacy considerations. DHRS will assign a single point of contact to each case and will inform beneficiaries of any potential benefits entitlements in writing. All necessary claim forms will be provided promptly, and assistance given in completing and processing the forms. You should also contact your Payroll Center of Excellence/Timekeeper for proper coding of the employee’s time sheet and to be sure all necessary documents that payroll requires are provided in a timely manner.

How to tell my employees about the news?

Be sure to set a time for all to meet, or call in if you have employees not co-located with you. Be as straightforward as possible when addressing your staff and share insight and appreciation on how your employee contributed to the team and office. Let your staff know that they may request leave to take the day off, if needed. If some of your employees were away on vacation or ill, try to reach them by phone. If that is not possible, then arrange to meet with them in person on their return. This information is best delivered in person whenever possible, rather than through e-mail or other written announcement. Advise your staff that to the maximum extent possible and subject to mission requirements, employees will be permitted to use annual leave, compensatory time, or credit hours to attend funeral or memorial services for a co-worker should the services be scheduled during the duty day.

Should I involve Employee Assistance Program (EAP) counselors and/or the Chaplain when discussing with my staff?

When informing the staff, arranging for grief counseling by an EAP counselor and/or Chaplain (if available) is an effective approach, however, not always feasible. In the days following the news, you should arrange for an EAP counselor and/or Chaplain to come to the workplace to be available for your staff. When you contact EAP, you will be asked to provide whatever relevant information is available regarding the death of the employee and your assessment of the staff's reaction to the situation. A one to two hour debriefing session or meeting for employees should be scheduled as soon as possible. This meeting should be voluntary. Interested employees are encouraged to attend and should be given an opportunity to speak. There may be individual employees, identified by you or by the EAP counselors, who may need one-on-one attention, due to the severity of their grief reaction.

What if my employee is not co-located with me?

When warranted, another DLA activity more conveniently located may be requested to provide personal notification to the family or persons designated. DLA activities will provide personnel to accomplish family or designee notification and assistance. If there is no DLA activity in the vicinity of the next of kin and travel would unduly delay the notification, support may be requested from another DOD activity for notification assistance.

How are personal and work related effects handled?

The personal effects of your staff member must be collected, inventoried, and safeguarded until they can be given to the family members. You will, in most cases, be responsible for inventorying and packaging the employee's personal effects. These items should be given personally to the family or designated next of kin either during a condolence visit, during a benefits information visit by a human resources specialist or by delivery to family members who elect to come onsite. Only in rare cases should the items be mailed. In all cases, a written record should be kept of items provided to the next of kin. You must maintain the record as long as necessary, but no less than two years. You will also need to make arrangements for the return of Government property in the charge of the employee, including Government credit cards, civilian identification card, office keys, issued equipment, etc. These arrangements should be made after the initial notification visit, when the employee's survivors are ready to consider practical matters. A sample for a personal visit notification is provided in Enclosure 3 of DLAI 6105.

Does DLA have an official condolence letter?

Yes. Official condolence letters will be sent by you to the next of kin when an employee dies. The letter should be personal and sympathetic in tone, and should offer assistance whenever possible. A sample of a condolence letter is provided in Enclosure 3 of DLAI 6105.

How does the staff honor the deceased employee?

The relationship the employee had with co-workers will often determine how the workplace decides to honor and memorialize the deceased. Examples of work group responses include: creating a memorial bulletin board with photos and other meaningful images, holding a workplace event such as a luncheon or reception to honor the deceased employee, and inviting family members and close friends outside of work to share their memories with the group. You might also create a memory book filled with stories and sentiments from co-workers to give to the family.

What about staff coverage for unfinished or future work assignments?

A temporary, short-term plan can be put into place until a more permanent decision can be made. It is best to put a temporary plan into action as soon as possible to lessen the level of anxiety that may be present among the staff. Make it clear what is needed and who is responsible.

What do I do about the employee's vacant office space?

It is best not to make any abrupt moves in regard to space changes; people need time to grieve the loss of their co-worker before seeing his or her workstation cleared or reassigned.

What about the new employee?

Under the best of circumstances, a new employee needs to be prepared for possible negative comparisons with the deceased employee. If the deceased was particularly well-liked, the transition will be even more difficult. It is recommended to give staff notice of the new employee's start date, relevant work background and to prepare them for the change.

What happens if we experience a loss of work productivity and motivation?

As the manager, the death of an employee may result in lower productivity and motivation for a brief time. The debriefing held soon after the announcement will ease the impact of loss, but it may not be avoided entirely. Eventually, the work unit will return to its normal level of functioning.

What if after some time has passed one or more employees are still showing signs of depression and a lack of productivity?

If one to two months pass and you notice that one of your employees has not returned to his or her normal level of functioning and appears to still be grieving, talk with that employee, give them feedback on what you have observed, and share your concerns about them. You may suggest that they seek counseling from EAP or another support mechanism (e.g., health care provider or church leader). Often a loss in one area of someone's life, as in the loss of a co-worker, triggers unresolved feelings about previous losses or anticipated losses. This person may need extra assistance in coping with these feelings.

Attachment 2

SUPERVISOR'S CHECKLIST
IN THE EVENT OF AN EMPLOYEE DEATH IN SERVICE

The initial checklist below will assist supervisors with the process/procedures in the event of an employee death.

Note: Any death of an employee will be reported immediately by the head or designated representative of the activity where the incident occurs to the DLA Logistics Operations (J3) or the DLA Staff Duty Officer (SDO) after hours, for processing according to the DLA Situation Reporting (SITREP) at https://headquarters.dla.mil/DES/policy/i6106.pdf.

_____ Upon notification of the employee's death, obtain the name, phone number, relationship to the deceased employee from the individual calling, and funeral arrangements if available.

_____ The employee's supervisor or designated representative is responsible for ensuring proper notification occurs within the enterprise and assistance is provided to the family members, or the designated next of kin. Advisory services are available i.e., Chaplain, Employee Assistance Program (EAP) to assist in making notifications.

_____ The supervisor or designated representative will prepare an official condolence letters to be sent by his/her activity to the next of kin when an employee dies. The letter should be personal and sympathetic in tone and should offer assistance whenever possible. A sample of a condolence letter is provided in DLAI 6105, Enclosure 3.

_____ The supervisor or designated representative will contact the DLA Human Resources Services for assistance in providing information to the deceased employee's family, or designated next of kin regarding benefits, entitlements, and responsibilities (https://employees.hr.dla.mil/contactus/). It should be noted the DHRS cannot provide Management/Supervisors with family members, designation of beneficiary, or next of kin information due to privacy considerations. DHRS will assign a single point of contact to each case and will inform beneficiaries of any potential benefits entitlements in writing. All necessary claim forms will be provided promptly, and assistance given in completing and processing the forms.

_____Contact your Payroll Center of Excellence/Timekeeper for proper coding of the employee's time sheet and to be sure all necessary documents that payroll requires are provided in a timely manner.

_____ Supervisors will also make arrangements for the return of Government property in the charge of the employee, including Government credit cards, civilian identification Card, office keys, issued equipment, etc. These arrangements should be made after the initial notification visit, when the employee's survivors are ready to consider practical matters. A sample for a personal visit notification is provided in DLAI Enclosure 3.

_____ The personal effects of a deceased employee in the workplace or in the custody of a DLA activity will be collected, inventoried, and safeguarded until they can be given to the next of kin. The employee's supervisor will, in most cases, be responsible for inventorying and packaging the employee's personal effects. These items should be given personally to the next of kin either during a condolence visit, during a benefits information visit by a personnel specialist or by delivery to family members who elect to come onsite. Only in rare cases will the items be mailed. In all cases, a written record should be kept of items provided to the next of kin. This record will be maintained as long as necessary, but no less than 2 years.

_____ Supervisors in DLA activities are responsible for maintaining emergency contact information for all employees, to include the name, address, and telephone number of the employee's next of kin in the Electronic Official Personnel File (EOPF). This information will be safeguarded in accordance with Privacy Act requirements. Employees will be requested to update this information annually and as changes occur.

Attachment 3

Information & Advice to DLA Employees
Preparing Your Family Members

Nobody likes to think about our own death, especially how it would impact our families. However, preparing your loved ones in the event of your death and following these recommendations will help DLA in assisting your family through an extremely difficult and stressful time. What is particularly important is making sure your family members have point of contact information for your home organization, your supervisor, your servicing DLA Human Resources Office, as well as important benefits information. It's a good idea to take the time to update your emergency contact information and designations of beneficiary, and be aware of the many resources available for your family in the event of your death. The following are recommendations, information, and links which provide useful information for you to have in a secure and accessible place at your home so your family members have all necessary information in the event it is needed.

1. While it is your supervisor's responsibility to contact the DLA Human Resources Services for assistance in providing information to your family or designated next of kin regarding benefits, entitlements, and responsibilities as a result of a death in service, it is your responsibility to ensure your emergency POC information is up to date. This information will be safeguarded in accordance with Privacy Act requirements. Employees will be requested to update this information annually and as changes occur. You can update your personal information MyBiz and/or EOPF. These may be accessed at http://www.hr.dla.mil/tools/.

2. Be sure to have your DLA activity's general phone number as well as your supervisor's phone number accessible for your family. Your supervisor is responsible for ensuring proper notification occurs of a death in service within the enterprise and assistance is provided to family members, or the designated next of kin.

3. Keep DLA Human Resources Services contact information available in case there is a need to reach out to a human resource specialist. DHRS contact information is located at http://www.hr.dla.mil/contactus/.

4. Review and update your Designation of Beneficiary forms regularly and following life events such as marriage, divorce, birth of a child, etc. The order of precedence and/or designations of beneficiaries determine how benefits are paid in the event of your death. Designations of beneficiary for Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, Federal Employees Retirement System and Unpaid Compensation are filed in your electronic Official Personnel Folder (eOPF) which can be accessed at: https://eopf1.nbc.gov/dla/. Designations of beneficiary for the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) are filed directly with TSP. Information on completing designations of beneficiary is found at: http://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/life-insurance/designating-a-beneficiary/#url=Designation-of-Beneficiary.