

Dealing with Tragedy and Crisis In the Organization

Police Officer Killed
Impact on
Small Organizations

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Community At-A-Glance

- Mendota Heights, MN
- First Ring Suburb of St. Paul
- Affluent Community, Predominantly Residential
- 11,000 population
- Approximately 45 full time employees

July 30, 2014

- Police Officer Scott Patrick shot and killed during routine traffic stop
- Longest tenured officer on force
- 18 sworn officers total
- Day long manhunt – suspect captured and later convicted

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Immediate Considerations

- Family Contact
 - “What if” packet detailed who should contact family, desires for funeral, etc.
- City Council Contact
 - Media acts fast – have to inform them quickly
- Staff Contact
 - How to inform fellow officers, other employees

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Operational Considerations

- Manage as if it were an “emergency”
 - Establish Command, Finance, Logistics Contacts
- Designate alternate emergency manager
 - Ours was Chief of Police – he was preoccupied with more pressing issues
- Establish alternative police presence
 - Especially important in small communities
 - Need strong chain of command

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Media Relations

- Get ready to be bombarded
- Keep story simple until facts known
- Help shape story
 - Have professional picture ready to distribute
 - Pre-plan press conference location
 - Utilize PIO of State or County (especially if small organization doesn't routinely deal with press)
- Prepare statement for elected officials
- Monitor social media
 - Where I found out some details

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How to Best Utilize Elected Officials

- They will want to help
 - But little for them to do
- Find tasks for them to do
 - Donation management
 - Provide them talking points
 - Public sees them as face of city – help them be that presence

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Donation Management

- People will want to “do something”
 - Initially food – Designate donation manager
 - Tracks donations (for later recognition)
 - Can let people know what is/isn't needed
 - Second wave will be money for family
 - Local bank will set up account – keeps out of city hands
 - Desire for permanent memorial

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Grief Management

- Utilize police support groups
 - Funeral arrangements, memorials, etc.
- Police (and their families) will need support different than rest of organization
- Watch for news items (such as new shootings) that will re-kindle emotions
- Don't forget to take care of yourself!

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After the News Cycle

- Attention will wane, but grief stays
- How long will “temporary” memorials, badge covers, etc. be in place?
- Trial coverage
- Anniversaries

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Questions/Comments?

