

FSH FUNERAL GUIDELINES

11 March 2011

1. Areas of responsibility:

a. All Army Chaplains assigned to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, will respond to funeral requests for: Active Duty and retired Army, Navy, Marine, and Coast Guard personnel and their dependents, members of the chapel congregations, 100 percent disabled veterans of the Armed Services, and Congressional Medal of Honor recipients. The requesting funeral home will fax the deceased's DD214 to the Funeral Coordinator (fax: 210.221.2799). Because of the proximity of Air Force bases in the San Antonio area, Air Force chaplains at Air Force Base chapels will support Active Duty and retired Air Force members. Exceptions may be made by the MSG Chaplain.

b. Weekend funerals must be approved by the MSG Chaplain or Assistant MSG Chaplain.

c. Notify the Mortuary Affairs/Casualty Section (210.221.1752) of requests for high profile funeral arrangements.

2. Requests for Chaplain.

a. Point of contact for funeral arrangements is the Funeral Coordinator (210.221.2754) during duty hours, and the duty chaplain through the Installation Operations Center (210.221.2782) during non-duty hours. Instructions for the duty chaplain will be maintained in the duty log. When more than one funeral is scheduled for a given time, the duty chaplain will be the backup.

b. Requests for a specific chaplain will be coordinated with the Funeral Coordinator.

c. Requests for chaplain coverage of a funeral will be accepted only from the responsible funeral home, the mortuary affairs office, or Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery. When a memorial service is requested, or the remains have been cremated (with no funeral home involved), requests may be made from individuals.

d. All data will be registered on a funeral worksheet, maintained by the Funeral Coordinator. A copy of the funeral worksheet will be provided to the assigned chaplain and the facility, when appropriate.

3. Requests for Catholic Chaplain.

All requests for a Catholic Chaplain are coordinated with the Catholic Chaplain before they are accepted.

4. Requests for Jewish Chaplain.

a. Members of local congregations will be serviced by their local Rabbi, or call the FSH Jewish Lay Leader (210.221.2754). He will assist in obtaining a Rabbi. The Lay Leader should receive a courtesy call regarding Jewish funerals.

b. The Funeral Coordinator is responsible for monitoring this process and assuring proper funeral coverage.

c. Traditional Jewish funerals must occur within 24 hours of the death, except on Saturday. Weekend burials require approval from the Central Veterans Affairs office in Washington DC.

5. Requests for Muslim Chaplain. There is no Active Duty Muslim Chaplain at Fort Sam Houston. Contact the Muslim Lay Leader thru the Funeral Coordinator (210.221.2754).

6. Funeral Roster

The roster will be maintained by the Funeral Coordinator, in coordination with the Assistant MSG Chaplain. A DA-6 Roster is used to track and assign funerals. The duty chaplain will coordinate requests for weekend funerals, holiday funerals, and/or training holiday funerals, unless other arrangements for a chaplain have been made.

7. Requests for Chapel.

a. Requests for funerals must specify the religion requested (i.e., Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim). Normally, the religion of the deceased is the faith group determining the funeral. For example, if a Protestant service member is married to a Roman Catholic, and the Protestant dies, the funeral should thus be Protestant. No requests for "generic" funerals or "any chaplain will do" will be honored. All requests for coverage, which cannot be met, will be referred to the National Cemetery (210.820.3891).

b. The Funeral Coordinator will coordinate requests for use of a chapel, if possible, at the time of the request. Main Post Chapel and Dodd Field Chapel are the preferred worship centers for funeral/memorial services. Funerals for Soldiers who die on active duty and high ranking retirees (e.g., general officers) are high profile events which will be scheduled in the Main Post Chapel unless the family requests a different chapel. The Funeral Coordinator will identify any conflicts in scheduling with the chapel. Morning chapel funerals will be between the hours of 0900 and 1100. Afternoon funerals will be between the hours of 1330 and 1600. The scheduling funeral home should identify time of arrival of remains at the chapel. (When possible, the funeral home should be allowed 1 hour for set up.)

c. When the chapel is scheduled, inquire if music is requested. Only the contract chapel organists will play the chapel organs unless the Chapel OIC makes an exception. The telephone number of the contract organist for the scheduled chapel may be given to the funeral home. The funeral home will make the arrangement with the musician. A piano is also available. The funeral home or the family may provide a competent pianist.

8. Chaplain Responsibility.

a. The chaplain assigned funeral duty is responsible for the order of service and conducting the funeral.

b. Chaplains will contact the funeral home providing the services and the responsible funeral director as soon as possible. Chaplains are encouraged to contact the next of kin, if available, for coordination of services and pastoral care. To avoid confusion, chaplains should inquire if other clergy member(s) will be participating in the service.

c. In the event of a caisson funeral at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, refer to IMWE-SMH-RS Memorandum, Religious Support for Caisson Funerals at Ft Sam Houston Cemetery, 24 September 2009, located on the Fort Sam Houston website, click on "Chaplain."

d. Due to the large volume of funerals at Fort Sam Houston National Cemetery, Honors (volleys, taps, flag presentation) normally occur first at the gravesite, followed by religious rites (the Good Lord gets in the last word).

e. Chaplain uniform for funeral and graveside services will be as follows: Army Service Uniform, four-in-hand, with Service cap. Specific uniform information is available thru the Honors Platoon (210.221-0623/1780).