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Administrative Responsibility:	Associate Vice-President, Human Resources	Policy:	41.13

1. Introduction

Initial reports of a death may come from a variety of sources. Four factors are crucial during the initial stages to effectively manage the situation. These are:

- a. Prompt notification of the President (see “Notification”).
- b. Designated administrators respond as requested and provide support to the department(s) affected.
- c. All information received/conveyed is accurate.
- d. The university’s response to the death is considerate and respectful.

2. Notification

In all cases, once a death has been confirmed (see Section 6), the Office of the President shall be notified immediately.

Upon receiving notification of the death, the President shall immediately select an appropriate administrator as a designated “Contact Person” to act on behalf of the university and liaise with the family/next of kin. The Contact Person or designate and alternate shall be selected on the basis of his/her interest in, and familiarity with, the department involved. If possible, he/she should not be a member of the department where the deceased employee worked. They should consider and be sensitive to cultural differences, as well as religious traditions and/or backgrounds

This Contact Person will immediately notify the following people:

- a. Vice Presidents.
- b. Associate Vice-President, Human Resources.
- c. Administrator responsible for the employee (e.g. Dean, Director, or Campus Academic Administrator).
- d. Associate Vice-President, Community Partnerships.
- e. Associate Vice-President, Facilities and Ancillary Services.
- f. Health and Safety Advisor.
- g. General Counsel and University Secretary.

Each of these will have specific roles (see Section 7) depending on the circumstances of the death.

3. Information Requested

Upon receiving the initial report, the following information should be obtained by the contact person (if possible):

- a. Full name of deceased person.
- b. Where the death occurred.
- c. When the death occurred.
- d. How the death occurred.
- e. If the death occurred as part of a Vancouver Island University course, program or activity.
- f. If the police were notified: name of police officer and police file number
- g. If positive identification was made: the name of the person who made the identification and how identification was confirmed.
- h. The next of kin: name, address and phone number.
- i. Alternate contact person(s): name, address and phone number.
- j. Name and telephone number of person providing initial information.

Not all of this information may be available. Obtain what information is available and forward it immediately to the President's Office.

4. General

The response to the death of an employee shall take into account:

- whether the death occurred on campus or in the course of a university related activity.
- whether the death occurred during the employee's non-work time.
- whether the death was a result of illness, accident or some other circumstance.

5. Death on Campus or During University Activity

In the event that a death occurs "on-campus" or "off-campus" in the course of a University related activity, other than ensuring that initial emergency response has been provided, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer and Vice-President Administration shall be contacted for further guidance with regard to legal obligations and notification of the University College and Institute Protection Program (UCIPP) before taking any other action.

6. Confirmation of Death

Depending on the source of information and/or the circumstances of the death, it may be required for the Administrator receiving the initial report to confirm with the local police

agency and/or Coroner that a death of a member of the Vancouver Island University community has actually occurred.

This is required to avoid reporting misinformation and/or initiating this protocol when no death has occurred.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

This section provides an overview of the roles and responsibilities of the various Administrators who would be involved in the event of a death of an employee.

7.1 The President shall:

- a. Directly notify the:
 - Chair of the Vancouver Island University Board; and
 - President of the applicable union.
- b. Send a letter of condolence to the family/next of kin of the deceased.
- c. Officially inform the next meeting of the Vancouver Island University Board of the employee's death.

7.2 Designated Contact Person

The Designated contact person shall be the primary person responsible for coordinating the University's response in the event of the death of an employee. The Contact Person shall function as the principal conduit for information within the organization. His/her response shall be in accordance with these procedures. Human Resources will be available to provide support and guidance to the designated contact person.

The contact person shall select an Alternate to assist him/her in the fulfillment of this role for those occasions when the Contact Person may be unavailable.

The Contact Person and Alternate shall be reachable at all times and at their discretion internally publish their name(s) and their contact options (e.g. telephone numbers), via email.

The Contact Person shall ensure that the procedures outlined below are followed.

- a. Confirm that a death has occurred involving an employee of Vancouver Island University, what the circumstances were, and whether other students and/or employees were present at the time.
- b. Mobilize University resources as required to assist him/her in managing the response to the death and related considerations. If required, assemble an "Action Team" drawn from a list of available Administrators, to assist in the handling of this incident.

- c. Determine through contact with the coroner and/or police that proper notification of the family/next of kin has taken place.¹
- d. After the official notification has been made by the authorities, contact the family/next of kin (in person, if possible), within a reasonable time to express condolences and establish a link as being the official “contact person” for the University and offer whatever assistance is appropriate.
- f. Subject to the wishes of the family/next of kin, notify the University community by e-mail of the occurrence of the death, and if applicable, provide notice of the memorial service arrangements when that information is available.
- g. Draft a formal letter of condolence to be signed by an appropriate member of the senior administration, normally the President.
- h. Initiate a second contact with the family/next of kin within 24 to 48 hours of the initial contact to determine the memorial service arrangements and their wishes with regards to flowers, charitable donations, etc. and inform the appropriate Dean, Director, Campus Administrator, or Campus Academic Administrator;
- i. Provide ongoing information to the Sr. Administration and other designated administrators regarding the death, the wishes of the family/next of kin, etc.
- j. Provide information to the Office of the President to assist in the preparation of any press releases, as required.
- k. Liaise between the family/next of kin and any other university Administrators/Departments which they may be required to deal with in regard to the settlement of the deceased employee’s personnel and personal matters.
- l. Meet with the family/next of kin to determine if there are additional ways the university could respond. The Contact Person will answer questions and provide appropriate information the family/next of kin may require.
- m. Ensure that any normal mailings from the university to the deceased employee and/or family are halted.

7.3 The Associate Vice-President, Human Resources will ensure that:

- a. appropriate action regarding final compensation and benefit entitlements has been taken;
- b. the beneficiary or “executor of the estate” of the person has been informed of the death and advised of the insurance and pension provisions and the requirements for official copies of the death certificate;

¹ Notification of the family is normally done by either the physician who attended the person at the time of his/her death, or by the Coroner, or by the appropriate police agency (e.g. RCMP, Municipal Police). This responsibility should be left to those specific agencies/ individuals and the role of VIU’s administrator should be limited to confirming that this notification has actually occurred. Direct contact with the family/next of kin should not be initiated, if possible, until they have received the formal notification from the appropriate authorities.

- c. contact with the insurers has been made and the required paperwork initiated; the Pension Corporation has been notified of the death;
- d. the eligible survivor has been advised how to contact the Canada Pension Plan Office for benefits;
- e. Human Resources has initiated the final salary payment(s) to the estate of the deceased; and,
- f. the estate of the deceased is advised of any WCB related matters as necessary.

7.4 Dean, Director, Campus Administrator, or Campus Academic Administrator shall ensure that:

- a. His or her staff members are informed regarding the death of an employee within his/her department.
- b. Written condolences are provided to the family/next of kin.
- c. He/she attends the memorial service as a representative of the Department, or if unavailable, assigns an alternate.
- d. Arrangements for flowers or charitable donations, subject to the wishes of the family/next of kin, have been made, if required.
- e. A statement of tribute to the deceased employee is prepared for use within the organization as appropriate.
- f. The statement of tribute is formally presented at the next meeting of the Vancouver Island University Board, Senate, President's Council, as appropriate.
- g. The Director, Communications and Public Engagement is provided with a brief history of the career of the deceased, preferably accompanied by a photograph, for publishing in the next issue of the VIU electronic newspaper. Consultation with Human Resources may be required to accomplish this.
- h. In cooperation with the designated contact person, arrangements are made for the itemization and disposition of the contents of the employee's work area, and the return of any university equipment and/or library books.
- i. Where applicable, professional journals are notified to delete the deceased's name from their subscription mailing lists.
- j. Where the employee was a member of a professional association through the university, verify that the association has been notified of the employee's death.
- k. The Health and Safety Advisor or designate, has been contacted regarding arrangements for any critical incident stress management response required.
- l. If required, classes have been postponed or adjusted.
- m. If required, the responsibility for classes and/or duties has been re-assigned.
- n. If required, any work site closures, adjustments in hours of operation, etc., have been arranged.

- o. Any research, academic or scholarly activity, which was in progress at the time of death has been dealt with in a manner appropriate to the parameters of the activity.

7.5 The Director, Communications and Public Engagement is responsible for:

- a. Liaising with the media regarding the death and/or the circumstances surrounding it.
- b. Ensuring that a brief history of the career of the deceased, preferably accompanied by a photograph, is published in the next issue of the VIU electronic newsletter. The Dean, Director, Campus Administrator, or Campus Academic Administrator is responsible for providing this.

Employees of Vancouver Island University should refer inquiries from the media to the Director, Communications and Public Engagement.

Inquiries from non-media sources should be referred to the designated Contact Person.

7.6 The Associate Vice-President, Facilities and Ancillary Services shall ensure that:

- a. The lowering of flags occurs in accordance with Policy 44.12 relating to the death and the memorial service of the deceased person.
- b. In consultation with the Health and Safety Advisor, the provision of any security needs that are required for the preservation of evidence, protection of the scene, or protection of university property are arranged.
- c. Upon release of the scene by all the appropriate agencies, any repairs to facilities required as a result of any incident surrounding the death are promptly arranged.

7.7 Health and Safety Advisor

Various legislation and legal obligations require that accidental deaths that occur on any Vancouver Island University sites or during any university activity are fully investigated by the employer. The Health and Safety Advisor is assigned this role in conjunction with members of the Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee as required.

This investigation shall commence immediately to ensure that the most accurate information is obtained. Depending on the circumstances of the death, outside agencies may be conducting investigations. Full cooperation in the investigation process is expected from all members of the Vancouver Island University community.

In addition to coordinating the investigation on behalf of Vancouver Island University, the Health and Safety Advisor has the responsibility for:

- a. Serving as the primary liaison and point of contact between Vancouver Island University and any of the enforcement agencies with jurisdiction relating to the death (e.g. RCMP, WorkSafe BC, Coroner, etc.);
- b. Facilitating arrangements for any Critical Incident Stress Management responses for members of the campus community such as defusing, grief and loss, stress debriefing, and counseling.
- c. Filing the required documentation with WorkSafe BC

The Health and Safety Advisor will assist the primary Contact Person as required.

8. The General Counsel and University Secretary is responsible for ensuring compliance with the Freedom of Information/ Protection of Privacy legislation and providing guidance to administrators or employees in these matters.

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