



## Highway Maintenance Manual

### Chapter 02 Administration

#### Section 35 Other

#### Subject 01 County Highway Employee Fatality on STH

Bureau of Highway Maintenance

January 2017

### **1.0 Purpose**

The purpose of this section is to provide guidance on communication protocol when a county highway employee is killed while working on the State Highway System (STH).

WisDOT values its working relationships with the County highway departments. Expedient communication and response to a county employee fatality exemplifies the value WisDOT places on these working relationships. To assist you with what to do in this situation, one possible approach is offered below.

#### Process:

- Within 24 hours of the fatality, a regional representative will contact the County Highway Commissioner and offer assistance to the family and county from the region, and consider making direct contact with the family if appropriate.
- The regional office will notify the Director of the Bureau of Highway Maintenance (BHM) of the county fatality and the circumstances surrounding the incident.
- The WisDOT employee who had the closest working relationship with the deceased county employee and a managerial representative from the region should attend the wake and/or funeral. In some instances, it may be appropriate to have DTSD representation from the Bureau of Highway Maintenance in Central Office.
- The regional office will prepare a summary for the Secretary's office within three days describing the incident and attach draft letters to the County Highway Office and deceased worker's family from the department.
- Letters from the regional office and the Secretary's office should be sent to the County Highway Commissioner, and the deceased worker's family within five days of the fatality. Attached to this guidance are examples of past letters from the region and the Secretary's office to the worker's family and the County Highway Commissioner.

Remember, every incident is different and every individual is unique. Any words of condolence and any offer of support must be sensitive, sincere, and specific to the situation.

Sample Letter to Family from DOT Secretary

Date

Family's Address

Dear XXXXXX (last name of family),

On behalf of not only myself, but also the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, we would like to extend our condolences to your family for your loss.

The traveling public has been greatly served by the exceptional service (county employee's first name) provided for the State of Wisconsin throughout his career with (name of county). (County employee's first name) also showed dedication to his work by mentoring many student interns and providing them with important opportunities to learn valuable skills. (County employee's first name) was well liked and respected as a person and for the service that he provided each and every day.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Secretary

SAMPLE

Sample Letter to County Commissioner from DOT Secretary

Date

(Name and Address of Highway Commissioner)

Dear (Name of Highway Commissioner)

On behalf of not only myself, but also the Wisconsin Department of Transportation, we would like to extend our condolences to you and the family of (name of deceased county employee i.e. John Doe) who died in a crash while working on (example: US 41 in Fond du Lac County on (date)).

Losing a colleague, friend or family member is never easy. As you know, highway worker safety is a top priority for WisDOT. While we have been fortunate this past year that the number fatalities in our work zones have been relatively low, no single loss is acceptable. We will continue our efforts to maintain and improve worker safety and look forward to working with you in the future on this important effort.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Regional Director (name) of Region X at (phone number) or Operations Manager (name) at (phone number) at our XXXXXXXX Regional Office.

Sincerely,

[Name]

Secretary

Sample Letter to Family from Regional Director

Date:

(Name of surviving spouse/family)

Address

Dear Mr./Mrs. (family last name):

On behalf of my staff at WisDOT Region (x) in (city), please allow me to express my most sincere sympathies regarding your loss.

There are no words that can adequately express the sorrow all of us feel about this tragic event. Public service is not only an honorable profession, but it is a way to make a real difference in people's lives. No one exemplified this more than (county employee's name). For XX years he devoted himself to public service, making sure that highway travelers in XXXXX County would have the safest roads possible. For his service, we are grateful.

Please know our thoughts and prayers go out to you and your family.

Most Sincerely,

[Name]

WisDOT Regional XX Director