

**Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority**  
**Board Action/Information Summary**

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| <input type="radio"/> Action <input checked="" type="radio"/> Information | MEAD Number: | Resolution:<br><input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No |
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**TITLE:**

Intro to Family Assistance Plan

**PURPOSE:**

To update the Board of Directors on the development of the draft Family Assistance Plan.

**DESCRIPTION:**

Over the past decade, Metro has suffered accidents that have resulted in fatalities and severe injuries to customers and employees. The draft Family Assistance Plan was developed to meet the needs of victims and families in crisis who suffer severe injury or death as a result of Metro operations and demonstrates Metro's commitment to treating all victims and their families in a respectful, responsive, compassionate manner.

The draft plan was modeled after the Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 (PL 104-264), the Foreign Carrier Family Support Act of 1997 (PL105-148) and the Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance Act of 2008 (PL110-432). Recommendations from families affected by aviation and rail disasters were taken into consideration.

The draft plan includes guidance for providing information and support through a core group called the Assistance Team. The Assistance Team will provide families with information related to the incident, assistance with administrative processes and referrals for resources.

By spring of 2011 staff will return to the Board with a final Plan for Board acceptance. In addition, staff will prepare the supporting policy which outlines training and coordination of resources.

This initiative supports Metro's strategic goal to maintain and enhance Metro's image.

**FUNDING IMPACT:**

Metro will expand responsibilities of current employees and utilize volunteer efforts. Expenditures related to any crisis situations will be reported to the Board.

|                            |                                |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Project Manager:           | Peter LaPorte                  |
| Project Department/Office: | Office of Emergency Management |

**RECOMMENDATION:**

By spring of 2011 staff will prepare the supporting policy which outlines training and coordination of resources.



# Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

## Family Assistance Plan

Safety and Security Committee

November 18, 2010



# Purpose

- Update on the development of Metro's plan to be more fully prepared in assisting victims and their families in the event of an accident





# Background

- In July, Board recommended developing an assistance plan to ensure an effective, compassionate response to victims and immediate family
- Lessons learned:
  - June 22, 2009 accident
  - Workplace accidents and fatalities



# Development Tools

- National Transportation Safety Board
  - Aviation Disaster Family Assistance Act of 1996 (PL 104-264)
  - Foreign Carrier Family Support Act of 1997 (PL 105-148)
  - Rail Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (PL 110-432)
    - Title V-Rail Passenger Disaster Family Assistance
- US Department of Transportation
- US Department of Justice
- Concerns of Police Survivors (COPS)



# Development Tools-Family Recommendations

- Experience with families and victims
- Recommendations from families of those affected by rail and aviation disasters
  - Information and contact from experienced staff
  - Recognize the emotion
  - Minimize processes, procedures and schedules
  - Understand that little things matter



# Plan Elements

Assistance provided for two incident levels:

- Level I: small number of injuries and fatalities
  - Quick identification of victims
- Level II: large number of injuries and fatalities
  - Extensive rescue operation
    - Friends and Relative Center
    - Family Assistance Center
    - Joint Family Support Operations Center



# Plan Elements

- Led by the Office of Emergency Management
- Efforts to ensure an effective, compassionate response to victims and immediate family
- Development of the Assistance Team
- Coordination of Family Liaisons





# Role of Assistance Team

- Cross-section of volunteer represented and non-represented employees
  - Background expertise in customer facing areas
  - Organized by an Assistance Team Coordinator
- Serve as a resource for other team members in the execution of the Family Assistance Plan
- Provide the pool for the selection of Family Liaisons





# Role of Family Liaisons

- Volunteer employees
  - Training provided
- Provide/coordinate information
  - Services/benefits
  - Event-related news
- Coordinate resources
- Coordinate executive outreach
- Solicit family input for memorial events





## Next Steps

By Spring 2011, staff will develop a policy to support the plan outlining training and coordination of resources.



# Draft Family Assistance Plan

Meeting the Needs of Victims and Families in Crisis



Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority

## **Background**

Over the past decade Metro has suffered numerous accidents, including the Red Line accident on June 22 that has resulted in fatalities and severe injuries to customers and employees. These tragic events raise the issue of Metro's preparedness to meet the needs of victims and their families and demonstrate the need to establish a Family Assistance Plan (FAP) to provide guidance for meeting their needs. Metro is committed to treating all victims and their families in a respectful, responsive, compassionate manner.

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) is to provide assistance to the families of and/or individuals who suffer severe injury or death as a result of Metro operations.

For the purposes of this plan severe injury includes but is not limited to that which results in:

- death or is life threatening;
- complete dismemberment of a hand and/or foot;
- 3<sup>rd</sup> degree burns to the head or limbs or major portion of the body;
- permanent loss of sight or hearing or speech; and
- quadriplegia, paraplegia or hemiplegia.

Immediate Family Member is defined as a person who is related to the victim in any of the following ways: spouse, life partner, parent (includes stepparent), brother, sister (includes stepbrother or stepsister), child (includes legally adopted or stepchild) brother-in-law, sister-in-law, son-in-law, daughter-in-law, mother-in-law and father-in-law.

This plan identifies special measures needed to meet the needs of the victims and/or their immediate families. In particular, this plan outlines the efforts required to ensure an effective, compassionate and sensitive response to the victims and/or immediate families during this traumatic period of readjustment through the one year anniversary of the event.

This plan does not provide guidance for providing assistance to the families of victims of suicide. The Medical Branch of the Department of Human Resources has developed a Suicide Prevention Program which provides guidance and recommendations to address the needs of this specific circumstance. Further, the FAP is not intended to apply to any

injury suffered while committing or attempting to commit a crime or while under the influence of intoxicants or drugs unless taken under the advice of a physician. This policy does not supplant benefits available to employees under Metro's Workers Compensation Policy.

## **Plan Elements**

The Family Assistance Plan will provide assistance to victims and their families in situations of serious injury or fatality by:

- Managing information in the aftermath of the crisis;
- Providing post-crisis response to the family; and
- Meeting immediate family needs.

The plan further addresses the responsibility of the offices with duties outlined under the plan and is written for two incident scenarios:

- Level I- Small number of injuries and fatalities where the victims are quickly identified.
- Level II- Large number of injuries and fatalities where an extensive rescue operation is anticipated, and/or victims cannot be quickly identified.

## **Responsibility**

The plan does not supersede the obligations of departments with primary responsibility for accident investigation, claims adjudication and/or administration of benefits related to employee death. It is expected, and inherent in the plan, that those efforts are supported by the added resource for communicating relevant information to victims and their immediate families.

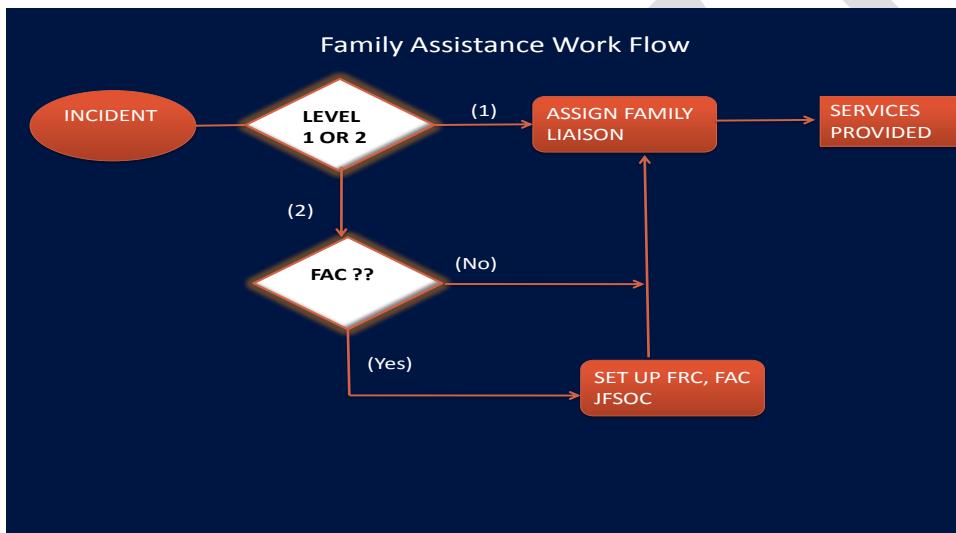
## **Office of Emergency Management**

The Office of Emergency Management has overall responsibility for the administration, implementation and coordination of the Family Assistance Plan. The Office of Emergency Management will appoint an Assistance Team Coordinator. The Assistance Team Coordinator, in consultation with the Chief of Police, will determine whether an event constitutes a Level I or Level II incident.

The Coordinator will maintain a list of assistance team members to act as family liaisons and respond once the plan is activated. Further, the Assistance Team Coordinator will assign/deploy family liaisons from the list of assistance team members, coordinate resources and act as the agency's lead family assistance representative during plan activation.

Level II incidents may require the Coordinator to organize information dissemination facilities such as, the Family and Relatives Center (FRC), the Family Assistance Center (FAC) and the Joint Family Support Operations (JFSOC). The FRC facility located near the accident site provide family and relatives with preliminary information regarding the incident. Once the injured and deceased have been identified, additional information may be available and a FAC is set up to focus on immediate services and resources for the families, provide a safe and secure gathering place and provide information of the incident. This facility may require activation until the rescue operation is complete. The JFSOC is the location where Metro leadership receives and gives information on the incident as it relates to family assistance.

*The incident workflow is illustrated below.*



## The Assistance Team

An Assistance Team, led by the Team Coordinator, will be established to provide information, support and assistance to victims and their immediate families and has the responsibility for working to address, to the greatest extent possible, their critical needs and concerns. The Assistance Team is comprised of volunteer represented and non-represented employees and managers with background and expertise in the areas of employee assistance, customer service, public relations, law enforcement, human resources and operations and will have access to information and jurisdictional resources such as crisis intervention, mental health and counseling organizations to meet the needs of victims and their families. Assistance Team members will have a degree of decision-making authority, which will aid in the immediate deployment of resources. To ensure the greatest consideration for the victims and their families and for the purpose of continuity, these critical needs can best be met by immediate,

continuous outreach through a central point of contact. Therefore, Metro's Office of Emergency Management will work with the Assistance Coordinator to assign a family liaison, from the pool of Assistance Team members to act as this central point of contact for the immediate family.

Departments including, but not limited to RAIL, BUS, Access Services, Performance, Communications, Office of Chief Financial Officer, Information Technology, Planning and Human Resources will commit resources to the assistance team process and designate, at minimum, two staff members as participants on the Assistance Team.

### **Assistance Team Training**

Assistance Team Members, through partnership with jurisdictional resources, will receive bi-annual training on all elements related to providing assistance. Training will include,

- Responding to a traumatic event;
- Managing grief;
- Providing psychological first aid;
- Managing family requests;
- Identifying internal resources and processes;
- Familiarization with external resources; and
- Self-care, learning new coping skills.

Assistance Team members will not offer counseling, legal or other advice related to family assistance but rather serve as a conduit for information on available resources.

### **Family Liaisons**

The Assistance Team Coordinator will assign a family liaison as the central point of contact for the victim's immediate family. Level II incidents, where there are numerous fatalities or injuries, may require more than one family liaison per family to support the needs of the families and provide emotional support to one another as they work through the fine points of the event.

The family liaison will work closely with the Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD), the Department of Risk Management (RISK) and Office of General Counsel (COUN) to obtain updates into the accident investigation, information on any decisions made regarding the investigation, the availability of financial resources and to assist Metro departments with family communication efforts to help set the appropriate level of expectation. Family liaisons will not release confidential information regarding the

accident investigation to families and families should be reminded that information from any source other than those officially recognized may be unreliable.

The family liaison will arrange to share information with next-of-kin regarding details of the incident and will work with the Office of Public Relations to provide the family with advance notice of dissemination of information or news reports concerning the incident.

As soon as reasonably possible, the family liaison, in concert with the established resources, will coordinate support services for the family as needed. Services may include counseling, childcare, transportation or temporary accommodations. The family liaisons will arrange to provide the victim or next-of-kin with incident updates, information on the investigation approved for public release, referrals for grief counseling, information regarding benefits and assistance with other related services.

To a large extent, once the FAP is activated, all contact with the family must be made through the family liaison throughout each stage of the incident.

### **Executive Outreach**

It is incumbent upon Metro Executive Leadership to reach out to the victim or their immediate family.

- **Follow Up with the Injured**

In the event of severe injury, the family liaison will determine if executive outreach is welcomed. If approved by the family, the family liaison, Transit Police officer responsible for the initial notification and a member of the Executive Leadership team (or their designee), will pay a brief visit to the injured, or contact the injured or their immediate family via telephone. The family liaison is responsible for follow-up on any requests made by the family during the visit/call.

- **Follow Up with Family of the Deceased**

In the event of death, and if approved by the family, the family liaison, Transit Police officer responsible for the initial notification, if possible, and appropriate members of the Executive Leadership team will attend the funeral services.

In either case, the family liaison, in coordination with the Office of Risk Management (RISK), will ensure condolences are sent on behalf of Metro to the families of the victims at either the victim's home, hospital or funeral service.

## **Office of Risk Management**

Inquiries regarding benefits related to Metro employment are anticipated. The Office of Risk Management will work with the family liaison to effectively communicate the availability of financial assistance subject to required documentation.

## **Metro Transit Police**

The appropriate law enforcement agency, the Department of System Safety and Environmental Management (SAFE), in conjunction with Metro Transit Police Department (MTPD) is the lead for all investigations and on-scene management (MTPD General Order #365). In some instances, the National Transportation Safety Board will be the lead agency.

The MTPD has the principal responsibility of providing critical injury or death notification to the family. Additionally, the MTPD has the responsibility for cataloging, warehousing and arranging personal effects for return to the victim's families.

MTPD will notify the General Manager, Metro's Executive Leadership and the Office of Human Resources of any severe injury or death. Following family notification, detailed information will be made available to Metro's Board of Directors, Metro's Medical Services Branch and to the public by Metro's Department of Public Relations to various media outlets.

## **Office of Public Relations**

Coordination/dissemination of information to media outlets and the general public is the responsibility of Metro's Public Relations Office. Metro will make every effort to provide information to the families of the victim(s) before the family learns of it from other sources, such as the media. Information about the identity of victim(s) will not be released to the media until the next-of-kin has been notified. In Level II incidents, where Metro will provide the media with details of the crisis, the opportunity will be given to families to hear this information prior to public release.

Per protocol, release of the identity of deceased individuals will be made public only after notification of the next-of-kin. The identity of injured individuals will not be made public.

During an incident, the Public Relations Office will issue news releases, employee communication notices, customer bulletins, draft factual talking points, answer incoming calls, provide content for the web site , and update Metro's breaking news line. Staff will assist the subject-matter experts (the General Manager during a Level II event) at the scene by providing media relations support including preparing statements, arranging press interviews and press conferences.

The Public Relations office will work with the Assistance Coordinator to disseminate information to the families. Options for dissemination of information may include: a conference bridge where families of victims or those critically injured use a pass code to obtain general information, a website where victims and families can receive information on available services and benefits, and family meetings where more detailed information regarding event updates, specific benefit information and available services is distributed.

### ***Additional Support***

#### **Limited Term Family Needs**

The family liaison will have primary responsibility for coordinating continued outreach to victims and/or the immediate family for up to a year following the traumatic event.

The grieving process has no timetable and victims and their families may be in need of assistance after the immediate and post crisis phases of an incident as they begin to stabilize their lives and cope with the impact of the event. Victims and their families may experience a wide range of emotional, psychological, physical consequences. It is important to provide emotional support and recognition of the loss up to a year following the traumatic event.

With victim or next-of-kin in concurrence, the family liaison will coordinate with the General Manager (or designee) bi-monthly calls to, and/or quarterly family meetings with, the victims and/or their families for the first year following the event. The purpose of the outreach is to provide recognition of the loss and respond to questions related to the incident, as appropriate. It is anticipated that additional assistance, such as personal meetings with Metro Executive Leadership, may be requested. The family liaison, in conjunction with the responsible department, is responsible for review and coordination of action items resulting from the call/meeting.

## **Commemoration Ceremony**

The Office of Customer Service, Communications and Marketing (CSCM) is the lead for planning of the memorial service.

In the event of a Level II incident, where there is an event of mass fatalities and severe injuries, Metro will acknowledge the first anniversary of the event with a commemoration ceremony. At least four months prior to the anniversary date, families of the victims will be advised of the planning of a ceremony service. The victims and their families will be invited to take part in the planning process and be offered the opportunity to participate in the service. Inclusion in the planning of, and participation in, a commemoration ceremony validates and respects the family's loss.

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