

Notification of employee victim's kin

The manner in which an employee's family has been notified of his injury or death can have an effect on the company, good or bad, depending in how it is handled.

Case from a company in the shipping business: A sailor fell overboard from one of the firm's ships and was drowned in Cleveland. The company safety representative called the victim's parents and said: 'This is ... of ... I am sorry to tell you your son fell overboard and drowned today. Where would you like the body shipped? (silence) Well, we don't know how it happened. All we know is that he drowned today. If you can tell us where to ship the body, we'll get it off right away'.

In the first place, when at all possible, the company should be quick to notify the family in the proper manner that something has happened and it should be done by some member of the management team who is schooled in how to handle such situation.

The speed with which you let a man's family know he has been hurt and the manner in which you handle it can do a great deal to ease the pain, give the family strength to face the crisis and afford them some reassurance at a time they need it most. Word of how you treat the family of an employee in an emergency will get to other employees and their families in a very short time. Following is a quick checklist of what to do:

1. Appoint someone in upper management to handle the task of notifying the next of kin.
2. As soon as the emergency becomes known, determine as closely as possible the extent and nature of injuries.
3. Find out immediately where the victim is being taken.
4. Dispatch the member of the management staff handling notification to the victim's home as soon as it is known where the victim is being taken.
5. If it is a case of injury rather than death, give the man go-

ing to the home a few minutes head start and someone else from top management calls the man's wife and explains only that there has been an accident and he was injured. If it appeared really serious and you are questioned, say: 'Yes, but we can't be sure until we hear from a doctor'. Tell her that someone is on the way to her house to assist in whatever manner possible, and he should be there in a manner of minutes.

6. Meanwhile, the man at the office keeps in contact with the hospital to learn as much about the case as he can.
7. Upon arrival at the home, the member of the management first calls the office for any new developments and then, depending on the situation, offers to take the wife to the hospital, find someone to watch the children or make any calls she wishes.
8. In the case of a death, the man, after telling the widow of the accident, must offer to assist in any manner he can in making calls or handling arrangements. It is good to learn two things quickly: the family doctor's name and the family minister's name.
9. The staff member should remain at the home until other family members arrive or as long as he can, and it should be his duty to protect the family from calls or visits from the press.
10. Be prepared to pull strings where necessary. If it means handling reservations for a parent to fly in, handle it through the company. If food is needed, order it rather than making the widow cook for the children and be ready to assist in any manner possible.
11. Stay as long as possible without making the family feel you are a nuisance and leave immediately if requested to do so. But give the widow your phone number for the office and home and let her to refer any press calls to you or to call you if she needs anything.
12. If the estate immediately becomes clamped shut as time passes, give the family enough money to get them through the crisis. The few dollars it will cost will come back a hundred times over in good will.
13. Learn the name of a friend close to the family or a close relative and maintain constant contact with them through the time of the funeral. This will provide a good reading on any possible needs.