20-03 - Memorial Vigils

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

NEWSLETTER

Field Operations Support Services

MEMORIAL VIGILS

Memorial vigils are public gatherings, usually at the site of a death in the local community. The vigil may be in response to a recent death, or the anniversary of a past death. The death may have been sudden and caused by such things as a traffic accident, a criminal assault, or an adverse encounter with law enforcement. Memorial vigils are a time of mourning and remembrance for the public and the emotional level is oftentimes heightened, particularly in instances where a death occurred as a result of an encounter with law enforcement, so deputies should take as much care as possible not to further inflame the situation. Memorial vigils may have local or national media coverage.

Vigils may be preplanned, or they may be spontaneous, and the size of the gatherings can often vary. These gatherings also may generate calls for service from other concerned community members or businesses. The primary objective of Department personnel during any interaction with the public regarding a vigil should be to ensure sensitivity toward those grieving and to build community trust. In most cases, the public attending vigils are peaceful and law abiding. The right to assemble at a memorial vigil is protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution. Department personnel shall continue to respect the rights of all, including both the grieving and the residents of the affected area.

Should a memorial vigil generate a call for service, desk personnel shall notify the watch commander. A field supervisor, at the minimum rank of sergeant, shall be assigned and respond to any calls for service at a vigil site where a deputy presence is required. Should deputy personnel encounter a vigil not yet reported, they should inform a field supervisor as soon as possible, who in turn will notify their watch commander or supervising lieutenant. Absent a call for service, or some other compelling public safety interest, the presence of deputies at or near a memorial vigil may not be necessary.

Should a memorial vigil be established following a deputy-involved shooting or other deputy-involved incident, unit supervisors should ensure the primary involved deputies are not assigned to routine calls for service at/or adjacent to that vigil whenever possible and deputies should similarly refrain from driving by the location, absent a compelling need, to avoid perceptions of harassment. In the event deputy personnel find themselves driving past or in the immediate vicinity of a vigil resulting from a deputy involved shooting incident, they should ensure their body-worn cameras (BWC) have been activated.

If needed, supervisory personnel should make Department notifications, brief subsequent shifts, and request additional resources. In situations of advance notice, station personnel should consider preplanning by utilizing an operations plan and notifying potential additional resources.

Deputies responding to a vigil should evaluate their actions in furtherance of the Department's law

enforcement objectives against the probability of the potential outcomes. Considerations should include but are not limited to severity of criminal activity, the necessity of an immediate arrest, disparity in numbers between attendees and deputy personnel, reason for the vigil, hostility toward law enforcement, contingency plans, and availability of resources.

Department members should continue to provide policing services to the entire community while displaying and maintaining empathy towards those individuals in attendance at a memorial vigil who may have experienced trauma as a result of the incident. Personnel should seek voluntary compliance and self-governance of the memorial vigil group, strengthening community trust through engagement if possible. A dialogue initiated between a representative of the group and Department members can serve to clearly convey each side's expectations and the interventions that will occur for non-compliance. Our relationships with the community are critical to our overall law enforcement mission.

In disturbance situations, involved personnel shall concentrate on the Department's basic law enforcement mission of protecting life and property. This shall be done in a rapid, firm, fair, and impartial manner.

In many cases, law enforcement functions can be achieved without an immediate intervention. The Department's goal is a balance of our law enforcement mission and our commitment to the communities we serve.

Regardless of the type of occurrence, all existing Department policies and procedures shall be in effect, including firearms and use of force policies. All Department reporting procedures, including criminal and administrative, shall be followed.

Department personnel should make themselves aware of relevant policies affecting responses to vigils by following the links included in the reference section below.

If you require further information, contact Field Operations Support Services Unit at [REDACTED TEXT]

References

MPP 2-01/010.00 – Core Values

MPP 2-01/030.00 – Mission Statement

MPP 3-01/030.15 - Conduct Toward Others

MPP 3-01/110.00 – Community Policing and Engagement

MPP 3-06/200.08 - Body Worn Camera-Activation

MPP 5-06/030.00 - Crowd and Riot Control

MPP 5-06/030.11 - Use of Less Lethal Weapons During Civil Unrest

MPP 5-06/150.10 - Sheriff's Response Team Functions and Missions

Newsletter 14-07 - Citizens Taking Pictures/Video in Public Places

Field Operations Directive (FOD) 86-011 - Notification and Reporting of Significant Incidents

FOD 07-002 - Loud Party Disturbances

[REDACTED TEXT]