

## **CHAPTER 7 - NEXT OF KIN**

### **INTRODUCTION**

1. When personnel are fatally injured in an occurrence, the NOK expect appropriate treatment and release of information concerning their loved ones. To aid in this, DFS has adopted a process whereby the NOK are briefed on the accident investigation process and the contents of some DFS investigation documents prior to their public release.

2. There are two slightly different categories of NOK:

- a. those immediately related to crew members or personnel directly employed in the operations of the aviation asset (such as aircrew, maintenance personnel or SAR spotters); and
- b. those related to personnel who were killed collaterally or that were killed in the occurrence but were not directly connected to the operation of the aviation asset (such as persons on the ground, non-crew parachutists or passengers).

3. The first group of NOK have a vital role in the successful investigation of an occurrence, particularly from a Human Factors perspective since they may be the sole source of information that could help determine cause of an accident. The first group is usually interviewed by the Medical Member and the Human Factor specialist during the initial information gathering stage of the investigation; they may be consulted later during the analysis stage. The second group may also provide key insight on the occurrence upon interview by the Operations Specialist, for example. Both NOK groups have the requirement for just treatment and the expectation that a professional and thorough investigation will be conducted and that appropriate information will be forthcoming when available. Beyond the information that is part of the initial briefing, all NOK should be given an investigation Point of Contact (POC) so that they may make inquiries as they require.

### **NOK BRIEFING INTENT**

4. There are two official briefings presented by DFS to both groups of NOK, the Initial and Final Briefings. The intent of these briefings is to keep the NOK informed about the investigation process and status, identify an investigation POC, and to help them prepare for the eventual public release of the FTI, Epilogue, and FSIR. The briefings must be tailored to the audience, particularly when discussing complex aviation systems or situations, and be presented in as sensitive a manner as possible. It is important that the audience understands the material so information should be presented in a manner that they can understand or question areas that may not be clear to them.

## **INITIAL BRIEFING**

5. The purpose of the initial briefing is to describe in detail the investigation and FSIR processes and to provide the NOK with an advance copy of the FTI information prior to its official public release on the DFS Website. This briefing will take place after the CDS and the MND have been informed or briefed on the FTI.

6. DFS, DFS 2, or his designate will provide this briefing in person. The briefing will describe the role of investigation team in general, explaining the various specialists or groups involved. It may be of value to identify that other investigative processes might occur, such as a Board of Inquiry, and engage the NOK. More importantly, though, the point should be made that there is no relationship between the FSI and other investigations other than to pass strictly factual information. This briefing will also identify the FSI POC and explain the difference in role from the Assisting Officer; the FSI POC will update NOK regarding the stages of the FSI and explain any delays encountered in the normal investigation timelines.

7. Briefings will be coordinated with the affected Wing, particularly with respect to administration and attendance. Normally, the designated Assisting Officer and the padre would be present as the Wing's representatives, but this may vary according to the wishes of the NOK. After describing the FSIR process and associated documents, details of the FTI will be presented. Information relating to on-going analysis or hypotheses about the investigation shall not be released. The NOK should be left with a copy of the FTI and a copy of the investigation process summary, which, upon request by the NOK, may be forwarded under DFS cover letter to other family members.

8. The administrative details for this briefing should follow the considerations listed in DFS Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

## **FINAL BRIEFING**

9. The purpose of this briefing is to provide the NOK and survivors with a briefing on the results of the FSI prior to the public release of the final FSIR and Epilogue. In circumstances where the results might be controversial, it is recommended that NOK and surviving crewmembers be briefed independently, unless requested differently by those involved. Coordination with Wing and Unit commanders and their advisors is essential to meeting the aim of the briefings while minimizing stress on the NOK and survivors. This briefing will contain:

- a. a summary of the factual data;
- b. a summary of the analysis;
- c. the findings and causes as determined by the investigation; and

d. a summary of the recommendations made by the investigation.

10. The main briefer shall normally be the IIC. In addition, a suitably qualified individual (such as an IIC 1, the SI, DFS 2, or DFS) shall attend to address any questions related to the FSIR process, policy or legislative aspects of the CTAISB and/or *Aeronautics Act*. In preparing and presenting the briefing, the main briefer must bear in mind that the NOK may not be familiar with aeronautical terms or acronyms. Therefore, it must be presented in easily understood, layman's terms. The briefer must also bear in mind that the objective of the briefing is to explain the findings of the investigation, not to defend the findings.

11. This is a very emotional event for the NOK. They should therefore be asked if they would like to have either a military or civilian padre present at the debriefing. Normally, the designated Assisting Officer and a padre would be present on behalf of the Wing during the NOK briefing. Nonetheless, the wishes of the NOK as to the presence of supporting personnel, relatives or friends need to be considered, and where possible, respected.

12. The NOK should be left with a hard copy of the FSIR and a hard copy of the briefing. Soft copies shall not be distributed until after the public release of the FSIR and then only if specifically requested.

13. Following the briefing, the NOK should be advised when the FSIR will be made public. Normally two weeks should be allowed between NOK debrief and release of the FSIR to the public. However, NOK requests for delay of the FSIR publication will be considered by DFS.

14. Administrative and financial details for these briefings are contained in DFS SOPs. In general, a relaxed atmosphere, a free and open question format should be sought and sufficient time must be allotted for the briefs. As well, the briefing will not contain detailed medical information; pictures of the deceased or autopsy photographs (i.e. no shocking pictures or information will be presented).