



## RCMP and Notifying Next of Kin

One of the duties of a police officer is to notify the next of kin of the death of a loved one. This is a difficult duty that our police officers take very seriously. The RCMP takes all steps to ensure that the notification is done in a timely and sensitive manner. However, before notifying the next of kin, the RCMP must first establish the positive identification of the deceased. In some cases this requires that we go beyond what may seem to be the obvious and ensure that we have no doubt as to the identity of the deceased. We understand fully that the family members and friends of the deceased want to know of the tragic news as soon as possible but nothing could be worse than being given incorrect information.

No two crime scenes are identical and neither are criminal acts. Each scene provides its own unique challenges, which require investigators take all the necessary steps to preserve the scene, to maintain the integrity of the investigation and to ensure a successful conclusion. To be successful, there are certain procedures that must be followed.

Until a charge is sworn before the courts, a person or entity is not formally charged. To release information regarding the identity of a person or entity prior to charges being sworn is a violation of that individual or entity's privacy rights.

All criminal investigations involve careful consideration, examination of vital information, inspection, analysis, research and scrutiny. In conducting its investigations, the RCMP must ensure information is accurate and protected to safeguard the integrity of the investigation, the court case and the privacy and safety of all involved parties. A fundamental guarantee of our justice system is that a person is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The RCMP is required to conduct its investigations within parameters that are clearly outlined within legislation, policies and procedures. Our mandate is to protect the safety of Canadians. This protection includes the integrity of the investigative process and the safety of the victim(s) and/or witness(es). For this reason, the RCMP will not disclose to the public or media any information that may jeopardize or threaten the investigative or court processes.

We are well aware that the world of media moves very quickly, is extremely competitive and that new information is constantly in demand. However, the reality is that police work is conducted in an environment in which premature release of information can have far-reaching consequences.

Our primary responsibility is to the safety of the communities and citizens we serve and, as such, we must conduct professional, fact-based investigations regardless of the length of time it takes to do so. No one wants to see the persons responsible for a crime go unpunished or the wrong person punished.