

**§ 5503. Department of State notification of families of victims**

**(a) Department of State policy**

It is the policy of the Department of State pursuant to section 2715 of this title to directly and promptly notify the families of victims of aviation disasters abroad concerning citizens of the United States directly affected by such a disaster, including timely written notice. The Secretary of State shall ensure that such notification by the Department of State is carried out notwithstanding notification by any other person.

**(b) Department of State guidelines**

Not later than 60 days after November 16, 1990, the Secretary of State shall issue such regulations, guidelines, and circulars as are necessary to ensure that the policy under subsection (a) is fully implemented.

(Pub. L. 101-604, title II, §204, Nov. 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 3083.)

**§ 5504. Designation of State Department-family liaison and toll-free family communications system**

**(a) Designation of State Department-family liaison**

Not later than 60 days after November 16, 1990, the Secretary of State shall issue such rules and guidelines as are necessary to provide that in the event of an aviation disaster directly involving United States citizens abroad, if possible, the Department of State will assign a specific individual, and an alternate, as the Department of State liaison for the family of each such citizen.

**(b) Toll-free communications system**

In the establishment of the Department of State toll-free communications system to facilitate inquiries concerning the affect of any disaster abroad on United States citizens residing or traveling abroad, the Secretary of State shall ensure that a toll-free telephone number is reserved for the exclusive use of the families of citizens who have been determined to be directly involved in any such disaster.

(Pub. L. 101-604, title II, §205, Nov. 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 3083.)

**§ 5505. Disaster training for State Department personnel**

**(a) Additional training**

The Secretary of State shall institute a supplemental program of training in disaster management for all consular officers.

**(b) Training improvements**

(1) In expanding the training program under subsection (a), the Secretary of State shall consult with death and bereavement counselors concerning the particular demands posed by aviation tragedies and terrorist activities.

(2) In providing such additional training under subsection (a) the Secretary of State shall consider supplementing the current training program through—

(A) providing specialized training to create a team of “disaster specialists” to deploy immediately in a crisis; or

(B) securing outside experts to be brought in during the initial phases to assist consular personnel.

(Pub. L. 101-604, title II, §206, Nov. 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 3084.)

**§ 5506. Department of State responsibilities and procedures at international disaster site**

**(a) Dispatch of senior State Department official to site**

Not later than 60 days after November 16, 1990, the Secretary of State shall issue such rules and guidelines as are necessary to provide that in the event of an international disaster, particularly an aviation tragedy, directly involving significant numbers of United States citizens abroad not less than one senior officer from the Bureau of Consular Affairs of the Department of State shall be dispatched to the site of such disaster.

**(b) Criteria for Department of State staffing at disaster site**

Not later than 60 days after November 16, 1990, the Secretary of State shall promulgate criteria for Department of State staffing of disaster sites abroad. Such criteria shall define responsibility for staffing decisions and shall consider the deployment of crisis teams under subsection (d). The Secretary of State shall promptly issue such rules and guidelines as are necessary to implement criteria developed pursuant to this subsection.

**(c) State Department ombudsman**

Not later than 60 days after November 16, 1990, the Secretary of State shall issue such rules and guidelines as are necessary to provide that in the event of an international aviation disaster involving significant numbers of United States citizens abroad not less than one officer or employee of the Department of State shall be dispatched to the disaster site to provide on-site assistance to families who may visit the site and to act as an ombudsman in matters involving the foreign local government authorities and social service agencies.

**(d) Crisis teams**

Not later than 60 days after November 16, 1990, the Secretary of State shall promulgate procedures for the deployment of a “crisis team”, which may include public affairs, forensic, and bereavement experts, to the site of any international disaster involving United States citizens abroad to augment in-country Embassy and consulate staff. The Secretary of State shall promptly issue such rules and guidelines as are necessary to implement procedures developed pursuant to this subsection.

(Pub. L. 101-604, title II, §207, Nov. 16, 1990, 104 Stat. 3084.)

**AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF STATE**

Except as otherwise provided, Secretary of State to have and exercise any authority vested by law in any official or office of Department of State and references to such officials or offices deemed to refer to Secretary of State or Department of State, as appropriate, see section 2651a of this title and section 161(d) of Pub. L. 103-236, set out as a note under section 2651a of this title.