



SUDDENLY SINGLE

Financial Steps to Take After the Death of a Spouse

- 1. Request 10-12 certified copies of the death certificate, so that you'll be able to file insurance and Social Security claims and re-title joint assets.
- 2. Locate important papers and documents including insurance policies, business agreements, income tax forms, bank books, military records and membership cards; any of these may entitle you to benefits you're not aware of.
- 3. If you have life insurance, notify your agent to file a claim, and contact Social Security to file for benefits. If your spouse was a veteran, notify the Veterans Administration to apply for benefits.
- 4. Contact your spouse's employer; discuss any final or deferred compensation you may be entitled to, as well as life insurance, pension, and profit sharing benefits, and if appropriate, accident insurance, with the employee benefits office.
- 5. Locate your spouse's will and request that your lawyer take steps to begin the probate process.
- 6. If your spouse had a safe deposit box in his or her own name, ask your lawyer to advise you about the proper way to retrieve its contents, since laws differ from state to state.
- 7. It may prove helpful to write to any union, professional or fraternal organization, alumni association and other groups your spouse may have belonged to. Membership might entitle you to death benefits (usually through group life insurance).
- 8. Accumulate the paperwork for outstanding debts and promissory notes. Check with the lenders to see if any debts carried an insurance rider that would pay the debt in full at death.
- 9. Have your spouse's name removed from all joint accounts and investments and joint property, including any vehicles you may own.
- 10. Cancel extra credit cards or convert them to your name.

