

Hazardous Material Response

406.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

Exposure to hazardous materials presents potential harm to office members and the public. This policy outlines the responsibilities of members who respond to these events and the factors that should be considered while on-scene, including the reporting of exposures and supervisor responsibilities.

406.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Hazardous material - A substance which, by its nature, containment or reactivity, has the capability of inflicting harm during exposure; characterized as being toxic, corrosive, flammable, reactive, an irritant or strong sensitizer and thereby posing a threat to health when improperly managed.

406.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to respond to hazardous material emergencies with due regard for the safety of the public and those members responding to such incidents. This directive will also be supplemented by the St. Mary's County Emergency Operations Plan, the St. Mary's County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, and the St. Mary's County Radiological Emergency Plan.

406.3 HAZARDOUS MATERIAL RESPONSE

Members may encounter situations involving suspected hazardous materials, such as at the scene of a traffic accident, chemical spill or fire. When members come into contact with a suspected hazardous material, they should take certain steps to protect themselves and other persons.

The fire department is the agency trained and equipped to properly respond and mitigate most incidents involving hazardous materials and biohazards.

Responders should not perform tasks or use equipment without proper training. A responder entering the area may require decontamination before he/she is allowed to leave the scene, and should be evaluated by appropriate technicians and emergency medical services personnel for signs of exposure.

[Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: HAZMAT/BIOLOGICAL/RADIOLOGICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCEDURES](#)

406.4 CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps should be considered at any scene involving suspected hazardous materials:

- (a) Make the initial assessment of a potentially hazardous material from a safe distance.
- (b) Notify Emergency Communications Center, who will notify the appropriate fire department, hazardous response units, emergency management personnel, and the

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Duty Officer. Provide weather conditions, wind direction, a suggested safe approach route and any other information pertinent to responder safety.

- (c) Wear personal protective gear, being cognizant that some hazardous material can be inhaled.
- (d) Remain upwind, uphill and at a safe distance, maintaining awareness of weather and environmental conditions, until the material is identified and a process for handling has been determined.
- (e) Attempt to identify the type of hazardous material from a safe distance using optical aids (binoculars or spotting scopes) if they are available. Identification can be determined by:
 - 1. Placards or use of an emergency response guidebook.
 - 2. Driver's statements or shipping documents from the person transporting the material.
 - 3. Information obtained from any involved person with knowledge regarding the hazardous material. Information should include:
 - (a) The type of material.
 - (b) How to secure and contain the material.
 - (c) Any other information to protect the safety of those present, the community and the environment.
- (f) Provide first aid to injured parties if it can be done safely and without contamination.
- (g) Make reasonable efforts to secure the scene to prevent access from unauthorized individuals and to protect and identify any evidence.
- (h) Begin evacuation of the immediate and surrounding areas, dependent on the material. Voluntary evacuation should be considered; mandatory evacuation may be necessary and will depend on the type of material.
- (i) Assist with establishing a decontamination area when needed.
- (j) Activate automated community notification systems through the Department of Emergency Services, if applicable.
- (k) Request additional services as needed through the Department of Emergency Services.
- (l) Maintain accountability of all members at the scene to ensure proper decontamination and debriefing procedures are followed.

406.5 REPORTING EXPOSURE

Office members who believe they have been exposed to a hazardous material shall immediately report the exposure to a supervisor. Each exposure shall be documented by the member in an incident report that shall be forwarded via chain of command to the Shift Supervisor as soon as practicable. Should the affected member be unable to document the exposure for any reason, it shall be the responsibility of the notified supervisor to complete the report.

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Injury or illness caused or believed to be caused by exposure to hazardous materials shall be reported the same as any other on-duty injury or illness, in addition to a crime report or incident report as applicable. See the Work-Related Injury and Illness Reporting policy for reporting instructions.

For procedures related to Reporting Exposure, see the [Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: HAZMAT/BIOLOGICAL/RADIOLOGICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PROCEDURES](#)

406.5.1 SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

When a supervisor has been informed that a member has been exposed to a hazardous material, he/she shall ensure that immediate medical treatment is obtained and appropriate action is taken to mitigate the exposure or continued exposure.

To ensure the safety of members, safety equipment is available from the Police Services Coordinator and/or Fleet and Radio Communications Coordinator. Safety items not maintained by this office may be available through the appropriate fire department or emergency response team.

Supervisors will ensure documentation of exposures for personnel in accordance with the Work-Related Injury and Illness Reporting Procedure.

406.6 TRAINING

Agency personnel receive annual Hazmat Awareness training for events involving hazardous materials.