

Report Preparation

322.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to those members of the Office who complete investigations and reports as a part of their duties.

322.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office that members shall act with promptness and efficiency in the preparation and processing of all reports. Reports shall document sufficient information to refresh the member's memory and shall provide enough detail for follow-up investigation and successful prosecution.

322.3 EXPEDITIOUS REPORTING

An incomplete report, unorganized reports or reports that are delayed without supervisory approval are not acceptable. Reports shall be processed according to established priorities or to a special priority made necessary under exceptional circumstances.

322.4 REPORT PREPARATION

Reports should be sufficiently detailed for their purpose and free from errors prior to submission and approval. It is the responsibility of the member to complete and submit all reports taken during the shift before going off-duty unless permission to hold the report has been approved by a supervisor. Use of Force reports must be submitted prior to going off duty. (Md. Code PS § 3-514). Generally, reports requiring prompt follow-up action on active leads or arrest reports where the suspect remains in custody should not be held.

All reports shall accurately reflect the identity of the persons involved, all pertinent information seen, heard, or assimilated by any other sense, and any actions taken. Members shall not suppress, conceal, or distort the facts of any reported incident, nor shall any member make a false report orally or in writing. Generally, the reporting member's opinions should not be included in reports unless specifically identified as such.

For procedures related to Report Preparation, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Reporting Investigations](#).

322.4.1 HANDWRITTEN OR TYPED REPORTS

County, state, and federal agency forms may be block printed unless the requirement for typing is apparent. Supervisors may require block printing or typing of reports of any nature for office consistency.

Handwritten reports must be prepared legibly. If the report is not legible, the submitting member will be required by the reviewing supervisor to promptly make corrections and resubmit the report.

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In general, the narrative portion of reports where an arrest is made or when there is a long narrative should be typed or dictated. Members who dictate reports shall use appropriate grammar, as the content is not the responsibility of the typist.

Members who generate reports on computers are subject to all requirements of this policy.

322.4.2 ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES

The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office has established an electronic signature procedure for use by all members of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office. The Patrol Division Commander shall be responsible for maintaining the electronic signature system, ensuring that each member creates a unique, confidential password for his/her electronic signature and that the use of electronic signatures otherwise complies with the law (Md. Code CL § 21-106).

- (a) Members may only use their electronic signatures for official reports or other official communications.
- (b) Each member shall be responsible for the security and use of his/her electronic signature and shall promptly notify a supervisor if the electronic signature has or may have been compromised or misused.

322.5 REQUIRED REPORTING

In all the following situations, members shall complete reports using the appropriate office-approved forms and reporting methods, unless otherwise approved by a supervisor.

The reporting requirements are not intended to be all-inclusive. A member may complete a report if he/she deems it necessary or as directed by a supervisor.

322.5.1 CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

When a member responds to a call for service, or as a result of self-initiated activity becomes aware of any activity where a crime has occurred, the member shall document the incident on an offense report regardless of whether a victim desires prosecution.

322.5.2 NON-CRIMINAL ACTIVITY

Non-criminal activity to be documented includes:

- (a) Any found property or found evidence.
- (b) All protective custody and welfare detentions.
- (c) Any time a person is reported missing, regardless of jurisdiction (see the Missing Persons Policy).
- (d) Suspicious incidents that may indicate a potential for crimes against children or that a child's safety is in jeopardy.
- (e) Suspicious incidents that may place the public or others at risk.
- (f) Any use of force by members of this office against any person (see the Use of Force Policy).
- (g) Any firearm discharge (see the Firearms Policy).

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- (h) Any time a member points a firearm at any person.
- (i) Any traffic accidents above the minimum reporting level (see the Traffic Accidents Policy).
- (j) Whenever the member believes the circumstances should be documented or at the direction of a supervisor.

322.5.3 MISCELLANEOUS INJURIES

Any injury that is reported to this office shall require a report when:

- (a) The injury is a result of a drug overdose.
- (b) There is an attempted suicide.
- (c) The injury is major or serious, and potentially fatal.
- (d) The circumstances surrounding the incident are suspicious in nature and it is desirable to document the event.

322.5.4 DEATHS

Death investigations require specific investigation methods, depending on the circumstances. They should be handled in accordance with the Death Investigation Policy. The handling member should notify and apprise a supervisor of the circumstances surrounding the incident to determine how to proceed. The following incidents shall be appropriately investigated and documented:

- (a) Unattended deaths (no physician or qualified hospice care during the period preceding death)
- (b) Sudden, accidental, or suspicious deaths
- (c) Suicides
- (d) Homicide or suspected homicide
- (e) Found dead bodies or body parts

322.5.5 COUNTY PERSONNEL OR PROPERTY

Incidents involving county personnel or property shall require a report when:

- (a) An injury occurs as the result of an act of a county employee or on county property.
- (b) There is damage to county property or equipment.

322.6 ALTERNATIVE REPORTING FOR VICTIMS

Reports that may be submitted by the public via online or other self-completed reporting processes include:

- (a) Fraud;
- (b) Identity Theft;
- (c) Lost Article/Property;
- (d) Suspicious Incident;

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- (e) Theft;
- (f) Traffic Complaint; or
- (g) Vandalism

Members at the scene of one of the above incidents should not refer the reporting party to an alternative means of reporting without authorization from a supervisor. Members may refer victims to online victim assistance programs (e.g., the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) website for identity theft; the Internet Crime Complaint Center (IC3) website for computer crimes).

For procedures related to Alternative Reporting for Victims, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Citizen Access](#) and [Report Review and Responsibilities](#).

322.7 REVIEW AND CORRECTIONS

Supervisors shall review reports for content and accuracy and to ensure state laws and agency procedures were followed. If a correction is necessary, the original report should be returned to the reporting member for correction as soon as practicable. It shall be the responsibility of the originating member to ensure that any report returned for correction is processed in a timely manner.

For procedures related to Review and Corrections, see the Saint Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Report Review](#).

322.7.1 CHANGES AND ALTERATIONS

Reports that have been approved by a supervisor and submitted to the Records Section for filing and distribution shall not be modified or altered except by way of a supplemental report.

Reviewed reports that have not yet been submitted to the Records Section may be corrected or modified by the authoring member only with the knowledge and authorization of the reviewing supervisor.

322.8 STATE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

322.8.1 TEMPORARY DETENTION OR INVESTIGATIVE STOP SEARCHES

Certain temporary detention or investigative stops involving the wearing, carrying, or transporting of a handgun in violation of Md. Code CR § 4-203 that result in a search or seizure require the deputy performing the search to file a written report with this office within 24 hours of the incident. The report shall be completed using the form prescribed by the Secretary of Public Safety and Correctional Services and shall be provided to the Records Section and include:

- (a) The name of the person searched.
- (b) The circumstances surrounding and reasons for the search or seizure.