

## Traffic Accidents

### 501.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for responding to and investigating traffic accidents.

For procedures related to Traffic Accidents, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Collision Reconstruction Unit](#)

### 501.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to respond to traffic accidents and to render or summon aid to injured victims as needed. The Office will investigate and prepare reports according to established minimum reporting requirements with the goal of reducing the occurrence of accidents by attempting to identify the cause of the accident and through enforcing applicable laws. Unless restricted by law, accident reports will be made available to the public upon request.

### 501.3 RESPONSE

Upon arriving at the scene, the responding member should assess the need for additional resources and summon assistance as appropriate. Generally, the member initially dispatched to the scene will be responsible for the investigation and report, if required, unless responsibility is reassigned by a supervisor.

A supervisor should be called to the scene when the incident:

- (a) Is within the jurisdiction of this office and there is:
  - 1. A life-threatening injury.
  - 2. A fatality.
  - 3. A County vehicle involved.
  - 4. A County official or employee involved.
  - 5. Involvement of an on- or off-duty member of this office.
- (b) Is within another jurisdiction and there is:
  - 1. A County of St. Mary's vehicle involved.
  - 2. A County of St. Mary's official involved.
  - 3. Involvement of an on-duty member of this office.

#### 501.3.1 MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

Upon arriving at the scene, the responding member should consider and appropriately address:

- (a) Traffic direction and control.
- (b) Proper placement of emergency vehicles, cones, roadway flares or other devices if available to provide protection for members, the public and the scene.
- (c) First aid for any injured parties if it can be done safely.

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- (d) The potential for involvement of hazardous materials.
- (e) The need for additional support as necessary (e.g., traffic control, emergency medical services, fire department, HAZMAT, tow vehicles).
- (f) Clearance and cleanup of the roadway.

### **501.4 NOTIFICATION**

If a traffic accident involves a life-threatening injury or fatality, the responding deputy shall notify a supervisor or, if unavailable, the Shift Supervisor. The Shift Supervisor or any supervisor may request the Collision Reconstruction Unit or other appropriate personnel to investigate the incident. The Shift Supervisor will ensure notification is made to the Division Commander, and office command staff in accordance with the Major Incident Notification Policy.

#### **501.4.1 NOTIFICATION OF FAMILY**

In the event of a life-threatening injury or fatality, the supervisor responsible for the incident should ensure notification of the victim's immediate family or coordinate such notification with the Medical Examiner, office chaplain or another suitable person. Notification should be made as soon as practicable following positive identification of the victim.

The identity of any person seriously injured or deceased in a traffic accident should not be released until notification is made to the victim's immediate family.

#### **501.4.2 JUVENILES**

If a traffic accident involves a juvenile, the responding member should determine if a parent or guardian is on the scene. If one is not on the scene, the responding member should make every attempt to contact a parent or guardian. In the event a parent or guardian cannot be contacted, the member will contact a responsible adult.

### **501.5 MINIMUM REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

An accident report shall be taken when (Md. Code TR § 20-107; Md. Code TR § 20-113):

- (a) There is any injury (to include any complaint of pain/injury),
- (b) A fatality,
- (c) Any operator is determined to be driving under the influence,
- (d) Hit and run accident with the following conditions:
  - 1. Identifying vehicle information such as a registration plate, partial registration plate with make/model of the vehicle, unique identifying features of the vehicle which if seen by a deputy would be immediately identifiable or;
  - 2. Information concerning the identity of any occupant of the vehicle which would lead a prudent deputy to locate such a person using investigative techniques.
- (e) An on-duty member of the County of St. Mary's is involved.
- (f) The accident results in any damage to any County Government-owned or leased vehicle.

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- (g) The accident involves any other public agency driver or vehicle.
- (h) There is damage to public property.
- (i) The accident involves a public or private school bus.
- (j) There is damage to any vehicle to the extent that towing is required.
- (k) Prosecution or follow-up investigation is contemplated.
- (l) Directed by a supervisor.
- (m) The accident involves a vehicle transporting hazardous material.
- (n) Requested by the owner or operator of a vehicle involved, if reasonable.
- (o) A fire occurs in a vehicle while it is in motion on a state or county highway.

Accidents involving a Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) vehicle should be handled by MTA.

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

#### 501.5.1 PRIVATE PROPERTY

Generally, reports should not be taken when a traffic accident occurs on private property (not used by the public in general) unless there is an injury or fatality, a hit-and-run violation or other traffic law violation. Members may provide assistance to motorists as a public service, such as exchanging information and arranging for the removal of the vehicles.

#### 501.5.2 COUNTY VEHICLE INVOLVED

A traffic accident report shall be taken when a County vehicle is involved in a traffic accident that results in property damage or injury.

Whenever there is damage to an agency vehicle, a vehicle damage report shall be completed and forwarded to the appropriate Division Commander. The traffic investigator or supervisor at the scene should determine what photographs should be taken of the scene and the vehicle damage.

The Local Government Insurance Trust (LGIT) Accident Report shall be completed regardless of fault.

All accidents are to be reported as soon as possible or at least 24 hours after the accident, even if another vehicle is not involved or there are no apparent injuries or damages.

For procedures related to County Vehicle Involved, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: [Reports](#) and [Documentation of Vehicle Accident Reports and the Repair Process](#)

#### 501.5.3 INJURED ANIMALS

Office members should refer to the Animal Control Policy and make appropriate notifications when a traffic accident involves the disposition of an injured animal or when learning that a domestic animal has been struck by a vehicle (Md. Code TR § 20-106(b)).

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### **501.6 INVESTIGATION**

When a traffic accident meets minimum reporting requirements, the investigation should include, at a minimum:

- (a) Identification and interview of all involved parties.
- (b) Identification and interview of any witnesses.
- (c) A determination of whether a violation of law has occurred and the appropriate enforcement action.
- (d) Identification and protection of items of apparent evidentiary value.
- (e) Documentation of the incident as necessary (e.g., statements, measurements, photographs, collection of evidence and reporting) on the appropriate forms.

### **501.7 ENFORCEMENT ACTION**

After a thorough investigation in which physical evidence or independent witness statements indicate that a violation of a traffic law contributed to the accident, authorized members should issue a citation or arrest the offending driver, as appropriate.

Enforcement action shall be taken for more serious violations, such as driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, vehicular manslaughter, or other felonies. If a driver who is subject to enforcement action is admitted to a hospital, a supervisor shall be contacted to determine the best enforcement option.

### **501.8 REPORTS**

Office members shall utilize the Delta + program for reporting collisions by way of the Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS). All such reports will be reviewed and approved by the Special Operations Division.

#### **501.8.1 REPORT MODIFICATION**

A change or modification to a written report that alters a material fact in the report may be made only by the member who prepared the report, and only if required by the ACRS manual. Once a report has been approved, any corrections not required by the ACRS manual shall only be made by way of a written supplemental report. A written supplemental report may be made by any authorized member.