Traffic

500.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy provides guidelines for improving public safety through education and enforcement of traffic-related laws.

500.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to educate the public on traffic-related issues and to enforce traffic laws. The efforts of the Office will be driven by such factors as the location and/or number of traffic collisions based on citizen complaints, traffic volume, traffic conditions and other traffic-related needs. The ultimate goal of traffic law enforcement and education is to increase public safety.

500.3 DEPLOYMENT

Enforcement efforts may include such techniques as geographic/temporal assignment of office members and equipment, the establishment of preventive patrols to deal with specific categories of unlawful driving, and a variety of educational activities. These activities should incorporate methods that are suitable to the situation, timed to events, seasons, past traffic problems or locations and, whenever practicable, preceded by enforcement activities.

Several factors will be considered in the development of deployment schedules for office members. State and local data on traffic collisions are a valuable resource. Factors for analysis include, but are not limited to the following:

- Location
- Time
- Day
- Violation factors
- Requests from the public
- Construction zones
- School zones
- Special events

Office members assigned to uniformed patrol or traffic enforcement functions will emphasize the enforcement of violations that contribute to traffic collisions and consider the hours and locations where traffic accidents tend to occur. Members will take directed enforcement action on request, and random enforcement action when appropriate, against violators. Members shall maintain high visibility while working general enforcement, especially in areas where traffic collisions frequently occur.

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500.3.1 TRAFFIC COLLISION AND ENFORCEMENT REPORT

Annually, no later than March 1st, the Special Operations Commander or designee shall prepare a statistical computation and summary of traffic complaints, selective enforcement efforts and collision data.

The report shall include:

(a) Temporal and geographic distribution of Traffic Enforcement activities

(b) Temporal and geographic distribution of Traffic collisions

(c) Contributing factors of reported collisions

(d) Temporal and geographic distribution of traffic complaints

(e) Traffic education activities

The traffic report will be a guide to the establishment and implementation of selective enforcement and patrol strategies.

500.3.2 SELECTIVE ENFORCEMENT

(a) To reduce traffic collisions, traffic violations and community traffic complaints, all uniformed deputies will apply selective traffic enforcement techniques to traffic hazard/ complaint roadways within their assigned patrol areas.

(b) The St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office maintains a Traffic Safety Unit within the Special Operations Division to quickly implement directed and saturation selective enforcement and investigative techniques beyond the daily capabilities of the individual patrol deputy. The Traffic Safety Unit will:

1. Actively enforce traffic violations within traffic collision, complaint and hazard zones;
2.
3. Receive, document, distribute and enforce community traffic complaints;
4. Utilize traffic technologies and resources, including educational literature, speed awareness trailers, etc. to encourage voluntary compliance with traffic laws.

500.4 ENFORCEMENT

Traffic enforcement will be consistent with applicable laws and account for the degree and severity of the violation committed. This office does not establish ticket quotas. The number of arrests or citations issued by any member shall not be used as the sole criterion for evaluating member's overall performance.

Several methods are effective in the reduction of traffic accidents including but not limited to warnings, citations, and physical arrest.

500.4.1 CONTACT WITH THE VIOLATOR

The deputy sheriff will greet the stopped individual(s) in a courteous and professional manner. Absent exigent circumstances, the deputy sheriff will identify himself/herself by performing the following (Md. Code CP 2-109):

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(a) Display proper identification. For uniformed deputies, proper identification ensures the badge and name tag are prominently displayed. For deputies not in uniform, proper identification is performed by displaying the deputy's issued Sheriff's Office identification card accompanied by the badge.

(b) Provide (verbally) the following information:

1. The deputy's name
2. The deputy's agency identification number
3. The name of the agency, "St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office"
4. The reason for the stop

The deputy sheriff will request the driver's license and vehicle registration. If the patrol vehicle is equipped with in car video or the deputy sheriff is wearing a Body Worn Camera (BWC), the violator will be informed of the audio/visual recording of the traffic stop.

The deputy sheriff will not prohibit or prevent an occupant of the vehicle or any citizen from recording his/her actions if the citizen is otherwise acting lawfully and safely.

When feasible and safe to do so, the deputy sheriff should utilize their BWC to capture any visible evidence discovered on a traffic stop that leads to a citation, a SERO, or an arrest.

500.4.2 WARNINGS

Warnings are a non-punitive option that may be considered by the member when circumstances warrant, for example when a minor violation was inadvertent.

500.4.3 CITATIONS

Citations should be issued when a member believes it is appropriate. When issuing a citation for a traffic violation, it is essential that the rights and requirements imposed on motorists be fully explained. At a minimum, motorists should be provided with (Md. Code TR § 26-201):

(a) A copy of the traffic citation.

(b) An explanation of the violation or charge.

(c) The court appearance procedure, including the optional or mandatory appearance by the motorist.

(d) Notice that:

1. The motorist can enter a plea and pay the fine by mail or at the court.
2. Acknowledgement of receipt of the citation is not an admission of guilt.
3. Failure to acknowledge receipt of the citation may subject the motorist to arrest if a handwritten citation is issued. No acknowledgement is necessary if a citation is issued through Delta+ (Drop Service Acceptable).

500.4.4 PHYSICAL ARREST

Physical arrest can be made for a number of criminal traffic offenses. These cases usually deal with, but are not limited to (Md. Code TR § 26-202):

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(a) A violation relating to vehicles transporting hazardous materials (Md. Code TR § 21-1411; Md. Code TR § 22-409).

(b) A violation relating to the failure or refusal to submit a vehicle to a weighing or to remove excess weight from the vehicle (Md. Code TR § 24-111; Md. Code TR § 24-111.1).

(c) The person does not furnish satisfactory evidence of identity.

(d) The person refuses to acknowledge receipt of a traffic citation by signature (Md. Code TR § 26-203).

(e) The deputy has reasonable grounds to believe that the person will disregard the traffic citation.

(f) A violation for any of the following offenses:

1. Driving or attempting to drive while under the influence of alcohol, while impaired by alcohol or in violation of an alcohol restriction.
2. Driving or attempting to drive while impaired by any drug, any combination of drugs, or any combination of one or more drugs and alcohol, or while impaired by any controlled dangerous substance.
3. Failure to stop, give information or render reasonable assistance as required by state law in the event of an accident resulting in bodily injury to or death of any person (Md. Code TR § 20-102; Md. Code TR § 20-104).
4. Driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle without a driver's license unless exempt or otherwise authorized (Md. Code TR § 16-101).
5. Driving or attempting to drive a motor vehicle while the driver's license or privilege to drive is suspended or revoked.
6. Failure to stop or give information, as required by state law, in the event of an accident resulting in damage to a vehicle or other property (Md. Code TR § 20-103; Md. Code TR § 20-104; Md. Code TR § 20-105).
7. Any offense that caused or contributed to an accident resulting in bodily injury to or death of any person.
8. Fleeing or attempting to elude a deputy.
9. Falsifying, manufacturing, possessing or sale of any official document issued by the Maryland Department of Transportation (Md. Code TR § 14-110(b); Md. Code TR § 14-110(c); Md. Code TR § 14-110(d); Md. Code TR § 14-110(e)).
10. Racing a vehicle that results in serious bodily injury to another person (Md. Code TR § 21-1116(a)).

(g) A person is a nonresident, and the deputy has probable cause to believe that the person committed a violation that contributed to an accident.

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500.5 HIGH-VISIBILITY VESTS

The Office has provided American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Class II high-visibility vests to increase the visibility of office members who may be exposed to hazards presented by passing traffic, maneuvering, or operating vehicles, machinery and equipment (23 CFR 655.601).

500.5.1 REQUIRED USE

Except when working in a potentially adversarial or confrontational role such as during vehicle stops, high-visibility vests should be worn when increased visibility would improve the safety of the office member or when the member will be exposed to the hazards of passing traffic, maneuvering, or operating vehicles, machinery and equipment.

Examples of when high-visibility vests should be worn include traffic control duties, traffic accident investigations, lane closures and disaster scenes.

When emergency conditions preclude the immediate donning of the vest, members should retrieve and wear the vest as soon as conditions reasonably permit.

Use of the vests shall also be mandatory when directed by a supervisor.

500.5.2 CARE AND STORAGE

High-visibility vests shall be maintained in the trunk/storage area of each patrol and investigation vehicle, in the side box of each sheriff's motorcycle, and in the gear bag of each patrol bicycle. Each vest should be stored inside a resealable plastic bag to protect and maintain the vest in a serviceable condition. Before going into service, each member shall ensure that a serviceable high-visibility vest is properly stored.

A supply of high-visibility vests will be maintained and made available for replacement of damaged or unserviceable vests. The Police Services Coordinator should be promptly notified whenever the supply of vests needs replenishing.

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