

Traffic Collisions

501.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy establishes the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office standards for responding to, investigating, documenting, and reporting traffic collisions. Detailed investigative and reporting procedures are contained in the Traffic Collisions Procedure.

For procedures related to Traffic Collisions, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: Traffic Collisions

501.2 POLICY

It is the policy of the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office to respond promptly to reported traffic collisions, protect life and property, render or summon appropriate aid, conduct impartial investigations, enforce applicable laws, and complete reports in accordance with Maryland law and Office procedures. Unless restricted by law, collision reports will be made available to the public upon request.

501.3 RESPONSE

Deputies responding to traffic collisions shall assess the scene, request additional resources as needed, protect the public and emergency responders, and assume responsibility for the investigation unless relieved by a supervisor or another member with primary investigative responsibility.

501.4 NOTIFICATION

Supervisors shall be notified of collisions involving fatalities, life-threatening injuries, Office or County vehicles, office personnel, or other incidents requiring supervisory oversight. Additional notifications shall be made in accordance with the Major Incident Notification Policy and applicable procedures.

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 collision should not be released until notification is made to the victim's immediate family.

501.4.2 JUVENILES

If a traffic collision 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.

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501.5 MINIMUM REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Deputies shall investigate reported traffic collisions and complete the appropriate documentation as required by Maryland law and Office procedures. When minimum reporting requirements are met, an Automated Crash Reporting System (ACRS) report shall be completed. When an ACRS report is not required, deputies shall complete the appropriate information exchange and any other required documentation.

For procedures related to Minimum Reporting Requirements, see the St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office LE Procedures Manual: Collision Investigations

501.5.1 PRIVATE PROPERTY

Generally, reports should not be taken when a traffic collision 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 INJURED ANIMALS

Office members should refer to the Animal Control Policy and make appropriate notifications when a traffic collision 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)).

501.6 INVESTIGATION

Traffic collision investigations shall be conducted in an objective, impartial, and professional manner. Deputies shall identify contributing factors, determine whether violations of law occurred, collect and preserve evidence, document any findings, and take appropriate enforcement action when needed.

501.7 ENFORCEMENT ACTION

After a thorough investigation in which physical evidence, independent witness statements, officer observations, admissions, video, photographs, electronic evidence, vehicle data, and other competent information indicate that a violation of a traffic law contributed to the collision, 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.

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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.