

Disposition of Valuables and Personal Belongings

322.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish guidelines for encountering valuables found at emergency incidents and handling the personal belongings of medical patients requiring transport, with the primary goal of minimizing District liability.

322.1.1 DEFINITIONS

Definitions related to this policy include:

Personal belongings - Items that are in the immediate possession of a medical patient, such as clothing, backpacks, and eyeglasses.

Responsible person - An individual who has a direct relationship to the patient, such as a family member, friend, or neighbor.

Valuables - Items that have a significant monetary value, such as cash or jewelry.

322.2 POLICY

The Sanibel Fire and Rescue District explicitly does not assume liability or responsibility for the safekeeping, loss, damage, or theft of valuables found at incident scenes or the personal belongings of medical patients. District personnel shall focus primarily on life safety and incident mitigation and are not routinely responsible for securing civilian property. However, the District may make or take measures to secure personal property when it is deemed to be in the best interest of the patient.

322.3 GUIDELINES

The District does not have appropriate facilities for storing valuables and personal belongings for safekeeping. Therefore, alternatives to safeguarding unsecured valuables and personal belongings from emergency scenes will be taken whenever practicable.

322.3.1 VALUABLES

Any member encountering unsecured valuables, such as cash or jewelry, should immediately report it to the Incident Commander or the member's commanding officer.

Members shall not take unsecured valuables into District safekeeping under any circumstances. Valuables should be left in their original location, left with a responsible person at the scene, or turned over to a law enforcement officer. The member should document a description and the disposition of such valuables (e.g., "left on kitchen counter," "handed to PD Officer Smith," or "left with patient's spouse"), in the incident report.

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322.3.2 PERSONAL BELONGINGS

When a medical patient requires medical transport, a reasonable amount of their immediate personal belongings (such as a purse, wallet, or eyeglasses) may be transported with them in the ambulance at the patient's own risk and with the transport agencies approval.. If the patient has belongings that are too large or too numerous to be transported in the ambulance, members should attempt to leave the items secured at the scene or with a responsible person and document this disposition in the incident report.

If the patient has a pet and a responsible person cannot be located, the appropriate animal control resources should be requested from Dispatch and documented in the incident report.

Law enforcement should be requested to take custody of any weapons or illegal drugs/drug paraphernalia.