

Disposition of Valuables and Personal Belongings

322.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a process by which all valuables found at emergency incidents and the personal belongings of medical patients requiring transport are safeguarded or otherwise legally released for disposition.

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 will take reasonable measures to safeguard valuables found at incident scenes. Reasonable measures also will be taken to safeguard the personal belongings of medical patients who require medical transport.

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.

Valuables that cannot be secured at the location or left with a responsible person at the scene should be given to a law enforcement officer for safekeeping. The member should document a description and the disposition of such valuables, including the identity of any receiving individual, and, if applicable, obtain a receipt from the law enforcement officer and include it in the incident report.

A member should only take unsecured valuables into safekeeping when there is no responsible person or law enforcement officer available, and with the approval of a supervisor. The valuables should be inventoried, and the inventory should list any obvious damage if appropriate. A supervisor should witness the inventory.

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Members should document in the incident report the disposition of any reasonably identifiable valuables and a chain of custody report should be filed.

322.3.2 PERSONAL BELONGINGS

When a medical patient requires medical transport, their personal belongings should be transported with them, when practicable. If the patient has belongings that are too large or too numerous to be transported in the ambulance, members should make an effort to locate a responsible person to take possession of the patient's personal belongings and document the 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.