



## **SCIOTO VALLEY FIRE DISTRICT PUBLIC RECORDS POLICY**

Effective: 2/11/2026

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

Openness leads to a better-informed citizenry, which leads to better government and better public policy. It is always the mission and intent of the Scioto Valley Fire District (SVFD) to fully comply with and abide by both the spirit and the letter of Ohio's Public Records Act.

### **DEFINING PUBLIC RECORDS**

A "record" is defined to include the following: A document in any format – paper, electronic (including, but not limited to, business e-mail) – that is created, received by, or comes under the jurisdiction of the Scioto Valley Fire District (SVFD) that documents the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, operations, or other activities of the District.

A "public record" is a "record" that is being kept by this District at the time a public records request is made, subject to applicable exemptions from disclosure under Ohio or federal law. All public records must be organized and maintained in such a way that they can be made available for inspection and copying.

### **RESPONSE TIMEFRAME**

Public records are to be available for inspection during regular business hours. Public records will be provided promptly and within a reasonable period-of-time as required by Ohio Revised Code §149.43. While the District strives to respond to routine requests within three business days, the actual response time will depend on the volume of records requested, necessary redactions, legal review, and the method of deliver

## **HANDLING REQUESTS**

No specific language is required to make a request for public records. However, the requester must at least identify the records requested with sufficient clarity to allow the district to identify, retrieve, and review the records.

The requester does not have to put a records request in writing and does not have to provide his or her identity or the intended use of the requested public record(s). It is this District's general policy that this information is not to be requested. However, the law does permit the District to ask for a written request, the requester's identity, and/or the intended use of the information requested, but only if (1) a written request or disclosure of identity or intended use would benefit the requester by enhancing the District's ability to identify, locate, or deliver the public records that have been requested; and (2) the requester is first told that a written request is not required and that the requester may decline to reveal the requester's identity or intended use. Although not required, the district encourages requests to be submitted using the Public Records Request Form available on the district website to assist in prompt processing.

In processing the request, the district does not have an obligation to create new records or perform a search or research for information in the district's records. An electronic record is deemed to exist so long as a computer is already programmed to produce the record through the district's standard use of sorting, filtering, or querying features. Although not required by law, the district should consider generating new records when it makes sense and is practical under the circumstances.

In processing a request for inspection of a public record, a District employee may accompany the requester during inspection to make certain original records are not taken or altered. Inspection appointments may be scheduled to ensure staff availability and protection of records.

A copy of the most recent edition of the Ohio Sunshine Laws Manual is available via the Ohio Attorney General's website ([www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/YellowBook)) for the purpose of keeping employees of the District and the public educated as to the District's obligations under Ohio's Public Records Act, Ohio's Open Meetings Act, and records retention laws.

## **ELECTRONIC RECORDS**

Records in the form of e-mail, text messaging, and instant messaging, including those sent and received via a hand-held communications device, are to be treated in the same fashion as records in other formats, such as paper or audiotape.

Public record content transmitted to or from private accounts or personal devices is subject to disclosure. All employees or representatives of this District are required to retain their e-mail records and other electronic records in accordance with applicable records retention schedules.

## **EMS and HIPAA-Protected Records**

Certain records maintained by the Scioto Valley Fire District, including EMS Patient Care Reports and other records containing protected health information, are exempt from disclosure under federal HIPAA regulations and Ohio law. Requests for EMS medical records will not be fulfilled as public records requests. Individuals seeking their own medical records will be directed to complete the district's 'Request for Access to Protected Health Information (PHI)' form. Only de-identified or statutorily releasable portions of EMS records will be released in response to public records requests.

## **DENIAL AND REDACTION OF RECORDS**

If the requester makes an ambiguous or overly broad request or has difficulty in making a request such that the District cannot reasonably identify what public records are being requested, the request may be denied, but the District must then provide the requester an opportunity to revise the request by informing the requester of the manner in which records are maintained and accessed by the District.

If the District withholds, redacts, or otherwise denies requested records, it must provide an explanation, including legal authority, for the denial(s). If the initial request was made in writing, the explanation must also be in writing. If portions of a record are public and portions are exempt, the exempt portions may be redacted, and the rest must be released. When making public records available for public inspection or copying, the district shall notify the requester of any redaction or make the redaction plainly visible.

## **COPYING AND MAILING COSTS**

Those seeking public records may be charged only the actual cost of making copies, not labor. The charge for paper copies is ten cents (\$0.10) per page.

Due to the additional processing and redaction required, copies of individual Fire Incident Reports or EMS Run Reports are subject to a fee of \$5.00 per report.

Electronic copies provided by e-mail at the requester's option will be provided without charge unless extensive redaction or specialized media is required.

A requester may be required to pay in advance for the actual costs involved in providing the copy. The requester may choose whether to have the record duplicated upon paper, upon the same medium on which the public record is kept, or upon any other medium on which the district determines that the record can reasonably be duplicated as an integral part of the district's normal operations.

If a requester asks that documents be delivered to them, he or she may be charged the actual cost of the postage and mailing supplies, or other actual costs of delivery. There is no charge for e-mailed documents.

## **PAYMENT METHODS**

Payment for public records fees shall be made by check (personal or cashier's check) or money order, payable to the Scioto Valley Fire District. Payment must be received prior to the release of records when advance payment is required.

Cash payments will be accepted only by appointment with the District Fiscal Officer. Individuals wishing to pay by cash must schedule an appointment during normal business hours to ensure proper handling and receipting of funds.

The district reserves the right to require advance payment for any public records request involving copying, mailing, or other actual costs permitted by Ohio Revised Code §149.43. Records will not be released until payment has been received and processed.

Returned checks may result in denial of future check payments and may require alternative payment methods.

## **MANAGING RECORDS**

Scioto Valley Fire District's (SVFD) records are subject to records retention schedules. The district's current schedule is available at 100 North Front Street, La Rue, OH, a location readily available to the public as required by Ohio Revised Code § 149.43(B)(2) and on the district's website at <https://sciotovalleyfd.com/public-records-request/>.