



POLICY STATEMENT

Crime Scene Assessment

SU Policy Number: 404-410.0

ORIGINATING OFFICE

Department of Public Safety

PURPOSE

To specify procedures concerning initial processing of crime scenes in preparation for collecting physical evidence

OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish clear guidelines in the collection and preservation of evidence.

DEFINITIONS

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE: Physical evidence includes any and all objects that can establish that a crime has been committed. Physical evidence can provide a link between a crime and its victim or a crime and its perpetrator. This evidence, when presented in a court of law, will assist in determining the truth about a fact in question.

POLICY

Any item at the crime scene that can be used to solve what occurred constitutes physical evidence. The process of collecting physical evidence includes evaluating the crime scene, photographing and sketching the scene, searching for evidence, and properly collecting and preserving the evidence. To ensure this process is proper and effective, employees collecting evidence will follow the procedures listed in this order.

PROCEDURES

PROTECTION OF THE CRIME SCENE:

1. The crime scene is the place from which most physical evidence associated with the crime will be obtained. It provides the investigating officer with a starting point to determine the identities of the suspects and victims, and to piece together the circumstances of what happened during the crime.
2. Duties of the first officer on the scene:
 - a. Self-Protection- be sure the scene is clear of suspects or that the suspects are secure
 - b. Render aid to all persons in need
 - c. Secure and protect the scene by:
 - i. Keeping everyone out of the crime scene who is not directly involved with the investigation

- ii. Preventing access to the crime scene area- the extent of protective measures must be decided on a case-by-case basis

PRELIMINARY CRIME SCENE ASSESSMENT:

Assessment of the crime scene allows for the determination of the type of incident to be investigated and the level of investigation to be conducted. The investigator in charge will identify specific responsibilities, share preliminary information, and develop investigative plans in accordance with departmental policy and local, state, and federal laws. The crime scene assessment allows for the development of a plan for the coordinated identification, collection, and preservation of physical evidence and identification of witnesses. It also allows for the exchange of information among law enforcement personnel and the development of investigative strategies.

INITIAL SEARCH:

The investigator in charge will conduct the initial search with the crime scene technician(s) responsible for processing the scene. Conducting a scene walk through provides the investigator in charge with an overview of the entire scene. The initial search provides the first opportunity to identify valuable and/or fragile evidence and determine initial investigative procedures, providing for a systematic examination and documentation of the scene. Written and photographic documentation records the condition of the scene as first observed, providing a permanent record.

CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHS:

Before a detailed examination of the crime scene is made and before any items are moved or even touched, the crime scene should be photographed. Photographs should be taken utilizing overall, medium, and close-up coverage. Detailed photographs should be taken to show items of physical evidence in the condition in which they were found.

MEASURING DEVICES:

Measuring devices such as forensics scales and other devices are commonly used in crime scene photography to demonstrate relative size in relationships. Nevertheless, the use of such devices in every photograph may cause admissibility problems. Therefore, when the size of an item is of significance, a minimum of two photographs will be taken- the first photograph without measuring devices and the second with measuring devices.

DOCUMENTING PHOTOGRAPHS:

1. Crime scene photographs, like other evidence, will be documented. The member taking the photographs will complete a photograph log to record the following information:
 - a. Case Number;
 - b. Date of the Offense;
 - c. Date photographs were taken;
 - d. Location of photographs
 - e. Name of investigating officer;
 - f. Name of person who took the photographs
 - g. Name of the victim/suspect; and,
 - h. Type of crime.
 - i. Description of each photograph taken
2. The member will note in their incident report that photographs were taken and download those photos onto the computer

CRIME SCENE SKETCHES:

When needed, a sketch will be made to depict the location of all evidence. Sketches will be made prior to actual collection. Members will use one method for all measurements and decide what is to be sketched before starting. Members performing the sketching process should sketch only the essentials, such as the item of evidence and its relationship to other objects. Sketches will include those items or objects that have been photographed.

DOCUMENTING SKETCHES:

The following information will appear on each sketch made:

1. Case number;
2. Magnetic north (orientation);
3. Names of streets and/or landmarks;
4. Title (brief description of area);
5. Date and time sketch was made; and,
6. Sketcher's name, signature, and ID number.
7. "NOT TO SCALE" statement

CRIME SCENE DEBRIEFING:

Law enforcement personnel and other responders will participate in or initiate a crime scene debriefing to ensure the crime scene investigation is complete and to verify post-scene responsibilities. The crime scene debriefing is the best opportunity for law enforcement personnel and other responders to ensure that the crime scene investigation is complete. The investigator of the crime scene should establish a crime scene debriefing team, which includes other investigators, the crime scene technician, and the initial responding officer to:

1. Determine what evidence was collected;
2. Discuss preliminary scene findings;
3. Discuss potential technical forensic testing and the sequence of tests to be performed;
4. Brief the person in charge upon completion of assigned crime scene tasks; and,
5. Establish post-scene responsibilities.

RECISSION**APPROVALS**

Executive Management Team; 2/26/2020

FILENAME:

404-410.0 Crime Scene Assessment

DATE:

2/26/2020

DISTRIBUTION:

Public