



# HOMICIDE INVESTIGATIONS

**INDEX CODE: 1801**  
**EFFECTIVE DATE: 10-01-21**

---

Contents:

- I. Policy
- II. Homicide Investigations
- III. Duties of the First Officer at the Scene
- IV. Duties of the Patrol Supervisor
- V. Duties of the Patrol Division Platoon Commander
- VI. Duties of the Communications Section
- VII. Duties of the Criminal Investigation Division
- VIII. Proponent Unit
- IX. Cancellation

## **I. POLICY**

A suspected or confirmed homicide requires the on-scene supervision of a patrol division supervisor of at least the rank of Sergeant. If a Sergeant is unavailable, a Sergeant from the adjoining district will be notified and respond to the scene of the incident.

## **II. HOMICIDE INVESTIGATIONS**

**A.** Homicide is the killing of one human being by another. Depending on the circumstances, it may or may not be a criminal act. Whatever the case, the proper investigation of a homicide is one of the most exacting tasks with which a law enforcement officer can be confronted.

**B.** The responsibility for the coordination of a homicide investigation rests with the Criminal Investigation Division, Major Crimes Section. However, the solution of a homicide, together with the proper presentation of evidence, is a shared responsibility of the entire department.

**C.** The importance of the role of the first officer to arrive on the scene cannot be overemphasized. The successful outcome of the case may well rest with the effectiveness with which the scene is secured and protected.

**D.** To ensure that all cases are investigated in an efficient and professional manner, the procedures outlined in the following subsections will be adhered to, when reasonable, in every case of a homicide, as well as in cases of serious assaults where death may result, and in sudden unattended deaths involving questionable circumstances.

## **III. DUTIES OF THE FIRST OFFICER AT THE SCENE**

### **A. Render/Summon Medical Aid**

Administer first aid if there is the possibility of life remaining and summon emergency medical assistance.

### **B. Arrest the Perpetrator**

Never assume that the perpetrator has escaped. Arrest the perpetrator if possible. If the perpetrator is injured and is taken to the hospital, the on-scene supervisor will direct an officer to guard the individual.

### **C. Do Not Question Any Suspects**

Do not question the suspect about the incident and do not mirandize the suspect. If the suspect makes any statements, make notes of the information provided by him/her and provide details in your written police report.

**D. Obtain and Broadcast a Description of Suspect(s)**

Obtain and provide the Communications Section with all available information relating to the identity, physical description of the alleged suspect, location, as well as any information relating to suspect vehicles.

**E. Identify and Detain All Witnesses**

Obtain all pertinent information relating to the witnesses such as: names, addresses, DOB, and telephone numbers. Detain the witnesses pending the arrival of personnel from the CID - Major Crimes Section. If possible, isolate all witnesses and transport them to the location specified by the supervisor from the CID - Major Crimes Section.

**F. Identify and Protect the Crime Scene**

The first officer on the scene of a homicide will take complete charge of the scene until relieved by a senior ranking officer or CID - Major Crimes Section personnel. Fire department and medical personnel will be allowed access to the victim. This, however, should be limited to the number of personnel that is necessary. NON-CID – Major Crimes Section personnel will not touch or disturb anything on the scene with three exceptions:

1. Evidence may be taken into custody by an officer if in their judgment the evidence may be lost, stolen or damaged if left in its original position. If possible, the officer should note/photograph the evidence prior to moving it.
2. If medical assistance is being rendered by medical personnel, the officer will assist as requested and will attempt to preserve the crime scene to the best of his/her ability.
3. If it is absolutely necessary to move the victim, the position of the body, as it was found, will be noted/photographed by the officer.

**G. Initiate a Crime Scene Entry/Exit Log**

The responsibility for the maintenance of the crime scene entry/exit log (PD #176, Revised 09/00) will be the responsibility of the first responding officer. The log will list the name, the time in and time out of the crime scene, and the reason for entering the crime scene. Those officers whose names appear on the crime scene entry/exit log are required to submit a report indicating the purpose for their being at the crime scene. The report will also contain information regarding what, if anything, was touched by them or what, if any, action was taken by them. This report will be submitted prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty. Commanders and supervisory personnel will not be required to submit a supplement report if they are on scene only to carry out their supervisory and/or information gathering responsibilities.

**H. Maintain a Chain of Custody of the Victim**

If the victim is removed to a hospital and there is only one officer present, the officer will remain and protect the crime scene. He/she will contact Communications and request that another officer be directed to respond to the hospital with the victim. Supervisors will ensure adequate coverage for maintaining custody of the crime scene as well as maintaining chain of custody of the victim and the victim's clothes and personnel effects at the hospital.

**I. Prepare Documentation of Actions Taken**

Prepare written notes of all facts and details regarding the case in the officer's notebook. This information should include, but is not limited to, weather and lighting conditions, description of the crime scene, identification of the victim and all information pertaining to possible witnesses. A complete incident report containing all relevant information will be submitted prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty.

**IV. DUTIES OF THE PATROL SUPERVISOR**

**A. Deployment of Patrol Resources**

Assign whatever personnel are required to properly guard the crime scene, search for and apprehend the alleged perpetrator, maintain a chain of custody of the victim, and assist CID as required.

The supervisor will instruct all cars in the vicinity NOT to converge on the scene, unless the suspect is believed to be on the scene. He/she will also instruct that a systematic search of the area is conducted. If the suspect is believed to be injured, a check of all local medical facilities will be ordered.

Patrol supervision is responsible for the creation and integrity of the crime scene until relieved by CID.

**B. Communications Update**

Keep the Communications Section informed about all new developments in the case. Provide as complete and detailed a description of the assailant as possible, along with information on the route and method of escape, the weapons used and any probable injuries suffered by the suspect.

**C. Providing Assistance to CID Investigators**

The supervisor may be called upon to assign additional uniform patrol personnel to assist the Criminal Investigation Division with a variety of tasks as mandated by the dynamics of the investigation.

**V. DUTIES OF THE PATROL DIVISION PLATOON COMMANDER**

Whenever a homicide occurs, the patrol district platoon commander or senior ranking district officer will be in command. He/she will assign a police supervisor of at least the rank of Sergeant to supervise the preliminary investigation of the homicide.

**VI. DUTIES OF THE COMMUNICATIONS SECTION**

**A.** The Communications supervisor will ensure that the following information is obtained:

1. Location of the homicide
2. Location of the victim
3. Any and all information pertaining to the alleged suspect
4. Complainant's name, address and telephone number

**B.** Broadcast a description of the suspect(s) and any information relating to vehicles. All information will be relayed to the Maryland State Police and neighboring law enforcement agencies.

**C.** Dispatch a patrol supervisor and at least one patrol officer to the scene. Dispatch a patrol officer to the hospital if the victim has already been transported.

**D.** Upon request from the supervisor conducting the preliminary investigation, notify the appropriate Criminal Investigation Division personnel.

**E.** Dispatch any other assistance requested in support of the investigation.

**F.** Notify the District Commander, or on-call Night Commander.

**VII. DUTIES OF THE CRIMINAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION**

**A. Assume Command of the Scene**

The first member of the CID - Major Crimes Section to arrive on the scene of a homicide will assume command of the scene. Uniformed patrol officers will remain charged with the responsibility to protect the homicide scene until relieved by the CID - Major Crimes Section detective in charge. No unauthorized person will be permitted to enter the restricted crime scene.

**B. Initiate the Follow-Up Investigation**

The on-scene CID - Major Crimes Section supervisor, or in his/her absence, the on-scene CID - Major Crimes Section officer in charge, will direct the follow-up investigation in accordance with departmental standard operating procedures relating to homicide investigations.

**C. Investigative Responsibilities of the Homicide Unit**

The Homicide Unit is responsible for conducting the following investigations:

1. All Homicides;
2. Serious Assault with Intent to Murder cases where death is likely (injuries are considered life threatening by an emergency room physician);
3. All police uses of deadly force *not investigated by the Office of the Attorney General's Independent Investigations Division (IID)/Maryland State Police. The Homicide Unit will assist the Attorneys General's*

*IID/Maryland State Police investigators in the investigation of all deadly force incidents resulting in death and for in-custody death investigations;*

4. Suspicious death cases;
5. Deaths of any juvenile (excluding motor vehicle accidents);
6. Suicides, of all juveniles, or when suspicious circumstances exist and upon approval of a CID supervisor;
7. Critically Missing Persons where foul play is suspected;
8. Kidnappings/non-parental abductions where victim has not been recovered; and
9. Other incidents as directed by the Criminal Investigation Division Commander.

A district supervisor will consult with a CID - Major Crimes Section supervisor when it is unclear if the Homicide Unit will assume responsibility for an investigation.

**VIII. PROPONENT UNIT:** CID Homicide Unit.

**IX. CANCELLATION:** This directive cancels Index Code 1801, dated *01-28-16*.