



ASHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE



SOP 3003 - Evidence Collection & Processing

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ASSOCIATED DIRECTIVES

[Policy 509 - Body-Worn Cameras](#)

[Policy 901 – Crime Scenes and Evidence](#)

[Policy 1307 – Vehicle Towing](#)

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[SOP 3006 - Property & Evidence Submission](#)

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this procedure is to establish and carry out a standard method for the collection and preservation of evidence obtained by the department.

DEFINITIONS

Crime Scene: the location(s) at which a crime has been committed and/or where evidence of a crime is located or presumed to be located, and the site(s) of accidents and suspicious incidents where foul play could be involved.

Digital Crime Scene Images: for the purpose of this policy, digital crime scene images include any digital photograph, imaging, video recording, or audio recording of a crime scene for purposes of crime scene examination or evidence processing.

Patrol Forensic Technician: a department member from the Patrol Operations Division who has training in crime scene examination and evidence processing.

Forensics Services Technician: a non-sworn employee assigned to the Forensic Services Unit with advanced knowledge and training for crime scene examination and evidence processing.

Major Crime Scene: includes, but is not limited to, crime scenes related to an act resulting in serious personal injury or death, substantial property damage, or any other scene as determined to be connected to a major case by Criminal Investigations.

PROCEDURES

3003.1 PHOTOGRAPHS & VIDEOS

- A. Forensic Technicians will photograph crime scenes using the viewfinder of the camera to represent the subject area accurately. [83.2.2 a]
 - 1. On all major crime scenes and subsequent scene processing (e.g., searches), whenever possible, all items of evidence will be photographed/video recorded in their original location and condition before collection.
 - 2. Individual items should be photographed with and without a scale of measure to show proper relationship and size.
 - 3. Videos do not take the place of still photographs. Videos will be made in conjunction with photographs and taken before any other processing procedures. [83.2.2 c]
- B. In most situations, evidence should be marked for organizational purposes by placing a numbered or lettered evidence marker next to an item of evidence.
- C. Personally owned devices will not be used to photograph, videotape, or otherwise record crime scenes. [83.2.2 d]
- D. All case-related digital crime scene images will be documented and retained in the following manner: [83.2.2 a-c]
 - 1. All case-related digital crime scene images created by department personnel will be uploaded into the Evidence.com system no later than the end of the shift in which it was created.
 - 2. Only department-designated equipment (e.g., memory card readers or computer systems) will be used to download/upload or otherwise contain case-related digital images.

3. Videos will be tagged and categorized as specified in department training. Categorization procedures within [Policy 509 - Body-Worn Cameras](#) will be followed concerning digital images.
 4. Any employee producing digital image evidence will utilize a memory card reader [or other approved methods](#) to download the images from their issued device for upload into Evidence.com. No digital image files should be left on desktop computers, laptop computers, or camera memory cards after successfully uploading to Evidence.com.
 5. **Employees may access and/or review digital crime scene images only when such access/review is related to the performance of official duties.**
- E. The Chief of Police, the Professional Standards Commander, or any supervisor may limit or restrict any department employee from viewing digital crime scene images or recordings.

3003.2 CRIME SCENE SKETCHES AND MEASUREMENTS

- A. A sketch, including measurements, must be completed for all major scenes and/or when deemed necessary by a Criminal Investigations Section supervisor. Sketches reflect the layout, orientation, and relationship of items of evidence necessary for accurate scene documentation.
- B. The crime scene sketch must include large landscape fixtures and all items of evidence, excluding items removed from the crime scene area.
 1. A triangulation sketch should be utilized for crime scenes that are contained within a large circular or square area.
 2. When evidence requires a measurement of items spread out in a linear fashion (such as a vehicular collision), a baseline sketch must be completed.
- C. A standard metal tape measure will be used for all measurements less than twenty-five (25) feet.
- D. A standard measurement scale will be used for evidence distances less than twelve (12) inches.
- E. Crime scene sketches do not take the place of photographs or video. Sketches are to be completed in conjunction with photographs and video before the movement of any items of evidence.
- F. Rough or “pencil” sketches are completed on the scene using diagrams and measurement tables. Final sketches should be completed for submission with all other documentation in the case file. The rough and final diagrams must be attached to the case file in RMS.

3003.3 MARKING EVIDENCE

- A. Each item of evidence collected at a crime scene must be packaged or tagged and identified with the time of collection, date of collection, the location from which it was secured, and the collector's initials.
- B. The items should be placed in the appropriate container, sealed, and the container marked. The container should be sealed with tape, and the tape should be marked with the date, time, and collector's initials.
- C. No identification marks, barcode labels, or evidence tape will be placed directly on any evidence.
- D. Packaging and submission of evidence will be carried out in accordance with applicable department policies and procedures.

3003.4 LATENT FINGERPRINTS

- A. Latent fingerprints will be developed utilizing various types of fingerprint powders appropriate to the situation. [83.2.3]
 - 1. Latent prints should be examined and photographed before lifting when applicable.
 - 2. Once the latent fingerprint is developed and transferred to a fingerprint card, the technician must record all pertinent data on the card. Regardless of the quality, all latent print cards collected by Forensic Technicians will be retained.
 - 3. Any items of evidence that may be damaged during processing should be photographed actual size or with a scale of measure before and following processing.
- B. Every card containing a latent lift must include the following information: Asheville Police Department (APD) case number, date of collection, type of offense, victim's name, address of collection, specific location of latent lift, and name and personnel number of the individual making the lift.
- C. Each latent lift card will be placed into an envelope containing all the latent lifts from the particular case. The latent lift envelope will contain/; the APD case number; the type of case; the victim's name; the offense location; the number of latent lift cards contained in the envelope; the date the lift(s) were obtained; and the name and personnel number of the individual who lifted the latent print(s).
- D. Whenever any of the latent lifts contained in a latent print envelope is compared to the known impressions of any possible suspect, the name of the person compared, the name of the person making the comparison, the result of the comparison, and the date of the

comparison will be recorded on the latent print envelope. [A supplemental report will be completed under the associated case number.](#)

- E. Latent print cards/envelopes are considered evidence and will be submitted to the department's Evidence Unit in accordance with established department directives.

3003.5 MARKS AND IMPRESSIONS [83.2.1 a]

- A. Footwear and tire impressions will be processed by photographs and casting agents where appropriate.
 - 1. Impressions will be photographed with the camera lens positioned perpendicular to the surface on which the print exists.
 - 2. A scale of measure will be positioned to appear beside the print on the same plane as the impression.
 - 3. Indented prints should be photographed with the flash placed at an oblique angle to make detail more visible.
 - 4. Following the photographs, a casting may be made of the impression, marked for identification, and placed in a rigid container.
- B. Whenever possible, tool marks will be collected on the object on which they appear.
 - 1. If this is not possible, the tool marks will be photographed with the camera lens positioned 90 degrees (perpendicular to the surface where the mark exists).
 - 2. A scale will be positioned to appear in the photograph.
 - 3. Following the photographs, a casting may be made of the tool marks, marked for identification, and placed in a rigid container.

3003.6 BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

- A. Due to the exposure risks associated with biological evidence, the following guidelines will be followed to protect responding personnel:
 - 1. Technicians must wear personal protective equipment (PPE) before collecting any blood or bodily fluid sample. Dependent on the type and severity of contamination, PPE may include gloves, booties, full-body suits, facemasks, and/or hairnets.
 - 2. Always assume that evidence contaminated with biological fluids or suspected of being contaminated with biological fluids are infected.
 - 3. Do not smoke, eat, or drink until after removing personal protective equipment and washing hands with a germicidal or antiseptic solution.
 - 4. Do not agitate stains to avoid flaking of fine particles that may be inhaled.

- B. Procedures for collecting DNA evidence in [SOP 3011 - DNA Collection & Testing](#) will be followed.
- C. All evidence contaminated with blood or other biological fluids or storage containers, such as air dry lockers, freezers, etc., containing biological fluids will be clearly labeled with a biohazard contamination label. [83.2.1 a]

3003.7 FIREARMS/AMMUNITION

- A. The collection of firearms and related evidence will be conducted in a manner that will ensure the safety of all personnel involved and the integrity of evidentiary items. [83.2.1 a]
- B. Firearms should not be moved unless to protect it as evidence or because it cannot be safeguarded. If a firearm must be moved, its location and position will be accurately marked and photographed where found, if possible. If photography is not possible, an accurate description of the location must be noted. The condition of the weapon, the number of cartridges contained, and the position of the safety should be recorded.
- C. If moving the weapon, lift it by grasping gently on the serrated surface of the handle or other areas that do not yield fingerprints (any knurled area). Never insert an object into the barrel to lift or move, as it may destroy evidence inside the barrel.
- D. Unless exigent or unusual circumstances exist, firearms must be unloaded before being transported for evidence. If a weapon cannot be unloaded (due to damage, for instance), a department firearms instructor will be consulted to render the weapon safe.
- E. [Bullets should not be removed from magazines.](#)
- F. When unloading a revolver, the position of the cylinder will be recorded, as should the markings on cartridges and conditions of primers.
- G. Fired bullets and cartridge cases will be protected, photographed, and their relative positions from each other will be sketched and photographed before being collected.
- H. Bullets will not be pried from objects or surfaces. Portions of the objects in which they are embedded will be removed with the bullet intact whenever possible. Only plastic tools may be used for the collection of bullets and casings.
- I. Gunshot residue examinations will use a gunshot residue kit approved by the North Carolina State Laboratory. The collection and documentation will be completed according to the instructions in the kit. [Gunshot residue must be collected within four \(4\) hours of the incident in accordance with the North Carolina State Crime Lab guidelines.](#)

3003.8 EVIDENCE PROCESSING AND EXAMINATION

- A. All evidence collected must be submitted to the Evidence Unit following all department procedures (see [Policy 1502 – Property & Evidence](#)). Evidentiary vehicles will be handled in accordance with [Policy 1307 – Vehicle Towing](#).
- B. Whenever possession of physical evidence is transferred from one person to another, a record must be made of the transfer. The transfer will be documented on a change of custody label or through the RMS system by Evidence Unit personnel. [83.2.1 d]
- C. Perishable evidence should be submitted to the appropriate laboratory as soon as possible after collection. If not submitted, it will be maintained in the following manner until submitted for analysis or released for destruction:
 - 1. Liquid blood or body fluid samples will be refrigerated.
 - 2. Other blood or body fluid samples will be air-dried and maintained in the Evidence Unit.
 - 3. Food items will be refrigerated by the Evidence Unit.
- D. [DNA evidence may be processed via rapid testing in accordance with SOP 3011 - DNA Collection & Testing](#).
- E. The primary investigator, Forensic Services Technicians, and Evidence Technicians are responsible for the coordination and completion of requests for analysis of evidence to be submitted to the North Carolina State Laboratory or FBI Laboratory. [83.2.1 d] [83.3.2 a]
 - 1. [Investigators will submit requests for examination via the Crime Lab Module in the department's Records Management System \(RMS\)](#).
 - 2. [Crime Lab Module Requests will be processed by Forensic Services Technicians for submission to the appropriate laboratory](#).
- F. [Officer](#) requests for blood alcohol concentrations in driving while impaired cases and requests for analysis for possible controlled substances should be submitted through the [Crime Lab Module in RMS](#).
- G. Evidence Technicians are responsible for transmitting evidence to the appropriate laboratory. [83.3.2 a]
 - 1. Before transporting any evidence to the North Carolina State Laboratory, an SBI-5 form must have been completed through the Forensic Advantage Portal by an approved Forensic Services user.
 - 2. All submitted items of evidence must be packaged according to the policy and procedure for evidence submissions established by the North Carolina Crime Laboratory. [83.3.2 b]

3. A completed SBI-5 form must accompany all submitted evidence when transmitted to the laboratory. [83.3.2 c]
4. The chain of custody record for any evidence submitted to a laboratory must include: [83.3.2 d]
 - a. The name of the person last having custody of the item;
 - b. The date of submission;
 - c. The date of receipt in the laboratory; and
 - d. Name and signature of the person in the laboratory receiving the evidence.
- H. Entry and submission for requests for evidence examination via Forensic Advantage or the letter of transmittal will serve as the written request that the laboratory provides a written report of the examination results. [83.3.2 e]
- I. When possible and appropriate, a Forensic Services Technician will collect materials and substances from known [standards](#) for submission to the laboratory for comparison with the physical evidence collected. [83.3.1]
 1. When known [standards](#) would assist in the investigation, but it is not possible to collect at the time the crime scene is processed or requires a court order/search warrant, the Forensic Services Technician must notify the case investigator in writing.
 2. The investigator is responsible for locating or obtaining access to the [standards](#), including any necessary court orders or search warrants.

3003.9 DOCUMENTATION [83.2.6]

- A. The Forensic Technician processing a crime scene will complete [crime scene report forms that will be attached to the associated case number\(s\) in the department's Records Management System. Additional narratives may be provided in supplemental reports.](#)
- B. [Documentation of collected DNA samples will be completed per SOP 3011 - DNA Collection & Testing.](#)
- C. The Forensic Technician processing the scene may be responsible for the collection/ submission of additional documentation as appropriate to the situation, such as, but not limited to:
 1. Field or lab notes.
 2. Medication log.
 3. Autopsy documentation.

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4. Any other documentation received by the Forensic Technician not collected by the officer or detective on the scene.

BY ORDER OF:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Zack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

David Zack
Chief of Police