

ASHEVILLE POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY MANUAL

Chapter: 9 - Criminal Investigations

Original Issue: 6/1/1994

Policy: 901 - Crime Scenes and Evidence

Last Revision: 11/29/2021

Previously: 1630 - Crime Scene and Evidence



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INTRODUCTION

It is the purpose of this policy to provide officers and other crime scene personnel with guidelines to document, collect, package, and preserve evidence.

POLICY STATEMENT

Documentation, collection, and preservation of evidence are crucial steps in criminal investigation and often provide the basis for effective identification, documentation, and criminal prosecution. Crime scene personnel will take all care reasonably possible to ensure the integrity of evidence collected at crime scenes by adherence to this policy and associated departmental training.

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.

Forensics Services Technician: a non-sworn employee assigned to the Forensic Services Unit who possesses [extensive](#) 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 deemed as such by criminal investigations.

Patrol Forensics Technician: a sworn officer [who has completed the *Fundamentals of Crime Scene Investigations* course approved by the North Carolina Justice Academy.](#)

RULES AND PROCEDURES

901.1 GENERAL GUIDELINES

- A. The scope of crime scene processing is dictated by the seriousness of the crime and the complexity of the crime scene. The officer in charge of the scene will request any necessary assistance from the appropriate forensic personnel via the communications center as outlined in [Policy 1503 – Forensic Services](#).
- B. All investigating personnel assigned to the scene of any crime are responsible for the protection, preservation, documentation, and all other needs pertaining to the scene and any physical evidence that may be located at the scene. This includes taking all measures reasonably possible not to disturb potential sources of evidence, such as footprints or tire marks, or cross-contaminate potential sources of DNA evidence.
- C. Disposable nitrile gloves will be worn whenever collecting or touching any items to be examined for evidence. This is for personal protection and to avoid contaminating potential evidence.
 - 1. [Gloves should be changed before collecting each piece of evidence to prevent cross-contamination.](#)
 - 2. Care should be used when touching or handling any item of potential evidence, as latent prints or biological evidence may be wiped or removed from the item's surface.

901.2 OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES [83.2.1]

- A. If needed for the safety of the community or officer safety, responding officers may make a careful and limited walk-through of the crime scene first to secure the location from the threat of perpetrators and locate any victims in need of medical assistance. All personnel

should be aware of any and all biohazards (e.g., blood and/or other biological fluids) or other hazards at the scene.

- B. As soon as practicable, a perimeter should be secured. The perimeter should be expansive enough to reasonably ensure that evidence of the crime will be contained and protected. [Crime scene tape should be used to create perimeter boundaries.](#)
- C. Excluding first-in emergency response units, officers should ensure other response vehicles are parked well away from the scene until the boundaries of the scene can be clearly established.
- D. Until the scene is secured, officers will ensure that no items are moved or tampered with before processing unless necessary (e.g., safety of others or preservation of evidence from destruction). If items must be moved, nitrile gloves should be worn.
- E. At a major crime scene, additional steps may need to be taken after securing the scene. As necessary, considering the nature and seriousness of the crime, officers should:
[83.2.1]
 - 1. Establish an inner and outer perimeter once the scene is secure by erecting [crime scene](#) tape, roping or cordoning off, or otherwise securing the immediate crime scene. Restrict nonessential personnel from entering the crime scene and ensure a [Crime Scene Log \(A-26\)](#) is completed.
 - 2. Advise arriving personnel of any personal protective equipment required before entering the scene.
 - 3. Record any alterations made at the crime scene due to emergency assistance to victims, the actions of persons reporting the crime, handling of any items of evidentiary value, or other actions. These actions must be recorded with as much detail as possible in the initial incident report or case supplemental report.
 - 4. Identify witnesses at the scene and conduct preliminary interviews as soon as possible. If practical, officers should attempt to identify additional witnesses or others in the immediate area who may have knowledge or information about the crime.
 - 5. If a victim or suspect is transported to a medical facility, whenever possible, an officer will escort the subject to provide security, document any comments, and preserve clothing and other related evidence.
 - 6. The criminal investigator or on-scene supervisor in charge should assess the scene and consider if a search warrant is necessary before collecting evidence, if further

scene security measures are necessary, and/or if any additional resources are required.

- F. Investigators should coordinate with the forensic technician(s) about evidence found, photographs needed, and other information that may be useful for evidence processing before the scene is processed and before the scene is released.
- G. If other law enforcement agencies, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation or State Bureau of Investigation, have been requested to investigate the crime and/or process the crime scene, department members will provide necessary scene security and assist these agencies as needed or requested.

901.3 EVIDENCE COLLECTION

- A. Forensics services technicians or patrol forensics technicians responding to a crime scene are responsible for:
 - 1. Meeting with the officer in charge of the scene and any investigators to determine the scope of the crime scene before the scene is processed and again before the scene is released.
 - 2. Processing the scene in accordance with department policy and procedures. This includes collecting and packaging all pertinent evidence, such as blood, fluids, latent fingerprints, footwear, and tire impressions, tool marks, firearms and bullets, gunshot residue, trace hair, and fiber evidence, documents, or any other item of potential evidentiary value (see [SOP 3003 – Evidence Collection and Processing](#)).
- B. If necessary for an investigation, Forensic Services Technicians are responsible for attending any necessary post-mortem examinations for evidence collection.
- C. Traffic Safety Unit officers will have the primary responsibility for evidence collection at traffic crash scenes or vehicular homicides to which they are assigned. Forensic technicians will be available to assist in evidence collection as requested. [83.2.6]

901.4 REPORTING PROCEDURES

- A. Officers conducting preliminary and follow-up investigations at a major crime scene will complete appropriate reports in accordance with policy. Reports should include:
 - 1. Date and time of arrival at the scene;
 - 2. Any relevant weather or situational conditions at the scene to include the status of the crime scene upon arrival (e.g., fire, crowds, and initial observations);

3. How the crime scene was discovered, and reported, and the relationship of reporting individuals to the victims or others if appropriate;
4. Identity of other officers or emergency personnel present upon arrival and those who responded to the crime scene thereafter;
5. Name, address, and telephone number or other appropriate identification of witnesses to the crime; and
6. Results of interviews with victims and witnesses to include in particular the identity or best possible description of suspects, method of operation, means of escape, and any other pertinent identifying information.

B. Forensics technicians will file all required documentation as outlined in [SOP 3003 – Evidence Collection & Processing](#).

BY ORDER OF:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David J. Zack". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, stylized "Z" at the end.

David Zack
Chief of Police