

# Police Department Policy and Procedure Manual

## Chapter 4 — Operations

**Section Number:** 4-10-6  
**Section Title:** Collection and Preservation of Evidence  
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### I. Policy

A. The purpose of this section is to provide members with guidelines and uniform procedures which incorporate scientific methods for the collection and preservation of physical evidence. A thorough, detailed evidence collection process will ensure that:

1. The integrity of the chain of custody of evidence is maintained.
2. The evidence will contribute to the success of investigations.
3. The evidence will facilitate the prosecution of criminal offenders.

### B. Training

1. All officers receive evidence handling and collection training in their initial academy and during the field training process.

### C. On-scene Responsibilities

1. It is the responsibility of the first officer arriving on the scene of an incident to secure the scene from all nonessential persons. The incident scene must be secured as soon as possible to prevent the contamination, disturbance, or loss of evidence. If necessary, the securing officer will request assistance from the Shift Supervisor in protecting the crime scene. The Shift Supervisor or responding officer will make a determination if an on-call detective is needed, and if so, request that the proper notification list be activated.
2. If the incident is a homicide, the officer securing the scene will initiate a log or include in his supplemental reports the name, time, and reason for all personnel who enter the scene up to the arrival of CID.

3. The securing officer will ensure that all personnel on the scene do not disturb or touch physical evidence while waiting for the arrival of the on-call detective. An exception to this would be in a situation where a danger exists of the evidence being lost or destroyed prior to processing by an on-call detective or a victim needing medical attention:
  - a. In this type of situation, it is the responsibility of the securing officer, whenever possible, to secure and preserve the evidence in an appropriate manner utilizing all available means at his disposal, pursuant to procedures outlined in this section
4. The securing officer will remain on the scene, until the scene is either turned over to the CID, or they are relieved by the Shift Supervisor.
5. The assigned on-call detective has the primary responsibility for processing the scene unless they are relieved by the CID Commander. They are responsible for photographing, collecting, preserving, transporting, and submitting all evidence to the property custodian.
6. If the incident is minor in nature, evidentiary items may be collected, preserved, and inventoried by the on-scene officer(s), pursuant to procedures outlined in this section. The officer will then request that the items be examined and processed by the evidence technician at the earliest convenience.
7. If the incident is major in nature, i.e., homicide, criminal sexual assault, arson, robbery, etc., the on-call detective will be notified. It will be the responsibility of the on-call detective to assess the situation and make the determination if they will process the scene or call the Investigation Commander for advice.

#### D. Requesting an On-call Detective

1. An officer may request an on-call detective at any incident scene which requires photography work or the preservation or collection of physical or trace evidence.
2. When requesting an on-call detective the following factors will be considered:
  - a. If a suspect is in custody or a known offender is suspected and evidence may place him at the crime scene;
  - b. If it appears that there is a strong likelihood of obtaining latent fingerprints suitable for comparison or other physical evidence that may link an unknown offender(s) to the crime scene at a later date;

- c. If there are visible footprints or tire impressions believed to have been left by the offender(s);
  - d. If there is visible blood or trace evidence present.
- 3. Call-out procedure
  - a. The responding officer will request an on-call detective through the communications center;
  - b. They should attempt to convey to the on-call detective any special equipment needed, i.e., camera equipment, latent fingerprint collection equipment, plaster casting kit, barrier tape, etc.
- 4. On-call detective availability
  - a. The department will maintain twenty-four (24) hour on-call coverage for crime scene processing and other evidence duties.
  - b. The Investigation commander will schedule his detectives to provide for seven (7) day a week on-call coverage.
  - c. The ideal time for on-call detectives' response to a crime scene will be within one (1) hour. It is the responsibility of the Shift Supervisor to see that this is accomplished.
  - d. In the event that the Shift Supervisor has made every effort to obtain an on-call detective with negative results, the Shift Supervisor should contact the Investigation Commander for assistance, or in the case of the Investigation Commanders absence, another member of the criminal investigation should be contacted.
  - e. Response to crime scenes that may contain physical evidence requires that such evidence be preserved and collected promptly. Additionally, response to incidents requiring photography work or other technical skills of a detective must be handled in a timely manner.

#### E. On-call detective arrival on scene

1. Once the assigned on-call detective arrives on the scene, the securing officer and/or reporting officer will review the crime scene and what has transpired with the on-call detective, including pointing out possible evidence or any items of special interest.
  - a. In all major incidents, the securing/reporting officer will remain on the scene until the arrival of the on-call detective.
  - b. If the incident is minor in nature, upon approval by the Shift Supervisor, the reporting officer may leave the scene prior to the on-call detective's arrival. The Shift Supervisor will only grant approval if there is a reasonable expectation that the area(s) targeted for evidence technician processing will remain secure or security is not an issue. Staffing availability will be a primary consideration in this decision.
  - c. In some situations, the on-call detective may request that the securing officer and/or reporting officer remain on the scene to provide assistance and/or security. This request will be made to the Shift Supervisor for approval.

#### F. Inter-Agency Coordination

1. The Investigation Unit Commander will be responsible for the following:
  - a. Ensuring that all assigned detectives are properly trained and equipped to serve as evidence technicians;
  - b. That all evidence equipment is maintained in operational readiness;
  - c. Adequate supplies are maintained and replenished;
  - d. In addition, any evidence supply or equipment problems will be brought to his attention.

#### G. Outside Agency Assistance

1. In some cases, it might be advantageous to the Department to utilize the services of an outside agency's technical support unit, i.e. Division of Criminal Investigation Evidence Technician Unit, State Patrol, Polk County Sheriff's Office, Des Moines Police Department, et al. In these situations, manpower availability, experience, and complexity of the crime scene will be considered.

2. The decision to request the services of one of the above agencies will be made by the Chief of Police, and may include soliciting input from the Investigation Division Commander.
3. If an outside agency is to be utilized, a request will be made to the applicable personnel to allow our assigned detectives to assist and/or observe in the crime scene processing. This will allow for increased coordination between the two agencies and the enhancement of skills for the participating department evidence technicians.

#### H. Equipment

1. Each on-call detective will have access to an evidence processing and collection kit and digital camera.
2. Each evidence technician kit will be equipped with necessary tools and supplies needed in the recovery of evidence.

#### I. Evidence Packaging

1. When any item of physical evidence is recovered by department personnel the following procedures will be followed:
  - a. The item will be placed in a suitable container or packaged appropriately, when practical, i.e., evidence envelope, brown paper bag, cardboard box, zip lock plastic bag, etc.
    - (a) The type of packaging used will be subject to the nature, size, and condition of the physical evidence;
    - (b) Detectives will rely on the recommendations by experts in the field and instruction received through training in determining which type of packaging is best suited for the type of evidence being processed;
    - (c) After the item is packaged or placed in a suitable container, the package or container will be sealed with red evidence tape;
    - (d) All evidentiary items will be bar coded and entered into property management system.
2. At no time will evidence be left unsecured once it is identified as having value to a criminal case, i.e., at the scene, in a vehicle, or in a Detective's cubicle.

3. To ensure the chain of custody the evidence will be transported from the scene to the station by the collecting officer or detective or to the laboratory, whichever is relevant to the situation.

#### J. Evidence Records

1. Whenever an evidentiary item is recovered, a case investigation report must be completed and the item bar coded.
2. A record will be made each time a transfer in custody of physical evidence takes place.

#### K. Lab Analysis

1. Periodically it may be necessary to submit recovered items of evidence to the crime lab for analysis, comparison, or processing.
2. It will be the responsibility of the assigned case officer/investigator to determine if it is necessary to submit evidentiary items to the crime lab.
3. When the determination has been made to submit evidence to the crime lab, the item(s) of evidence will be submitted / transported by the property custodian. The evidence will be submitted to the crime lab on the next business day, whenever practical.
4. Prior to any item of evidence being submitted to the crime lab, the submitting officer will go to the DCI Pre-Log website and complete the DCI lab form.
5. Upon submission of the evidence to the crime lab, the submitting officer/property custodian will retain a copy of the evidence receipt. This receipt will then be turned into the records section for scanning into the case file.
6. After the state crime lab has completed the analysis of submitted evidence and the police department has been notified that such evidence may be picked up, the retrieval officer/property custodian shall sign and receive a copy of the DCI state lab evidence receipt. This receipt will serve as documentation that the police department is in custody and control of such evidence
7. The state lab evidence receipt and the returned evidence will then be placed into a property locker or in the case where the property custodian retrieved the property it will be stored in the designated area inside the property room. The designated property officer shall retrieve the state lab receipt and evidence from the locker and place such evidence back into evidence storage. The state lab receipt will be used to facilitate recording on the police department property report who retrieved the evidence from the state lab and returned it to the police property section, as well as other required information necessary for evidence custody and control.

8. The property custodian will then submit the state lab receipt to the records section so that it may be scanned into the case file.
9. The crime lab provides the agency with a written report on all analysis and examinations conducted. Generally, these written reports are forwarded to the agency via electronic media (Internet). The property officer will print these reports out and then forward them to Records so they can be filed in the appropriate case files.



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