

	STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE <small>State Form 39870 (R/S-06)</small>	Reference Number LAB-005
	Subject Crime Scene Investigation Guidelines—Evidence Collection and Preservation	
	Special Instructions Replaces LAB-005 dated August 28, 2018	Effective Date November 16, 2023

I. PURPOSE

Establishes guidelines for securing crime scenes; obtaining the necessary permission to conduct a crime scene search; and collecting physical evidence for laboratory analysis and storage.

II. POLICY

Crime scenes shall be secured and searched, and physical evidence shall be evaluated and collected by Department personnel as outlined in this procedure.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. **“Property Officer”** – shall (for the purposes of this procedure) include Crime Scene Investigators (CSI), Laboratory Evidence Specialists, District Evidence Specialists, Crime Scene Investigations Supervisors, Laboratory Managers, or other laboratory personnel as designated by the Laboratory Division Commander having the necessary permissions to manage items of evidence.

B. **“Secure”** – When a cursory search has been made of the scene and the suspect(s) are either no longer present or are in custody, and all other persons have been removed from the scene.

IV. PROCEDURE

A. When aid has been rendered to victims as needed, the scene has been secured, and the other requirements in SOP INV-002 “Major Crime Scenes” have been accomplished, the initial responding officer, as well as the entire investigative team working the case, shall utilize the **“Crime Scene Investigation Guidelines”** noted below as a reference for investigating crime scenes:

1. Establish the dimensions of the scene and identify potential hazards

- a. Ensure the perimeter of the crime scene is established and is not too narrowly defined.
- b. Evaluate the crime scene for potential safety and health hazards and take appropriate and necessary action to minimize/negate the hazards (i.e. wearing masks, gloves, personal protection equipment, etc.).

2. Establish security of the scene

- a. Utilize personnel, crime scene tape, rope, barriers, etc., as necessary, to secure the scene.

b. Ensure a crime scene sign-in log is established and designate a single point-of-entry/single point-of-exit for the scene.

c. Do not allow anyone to enter the crime scene who is not authorized by the assigned investigating officer or by the Incident Commander.

3. Plan and organize tasks and responsibilities

a. The first responding officer, or the investigative team when present, shall identify tasks to be accomplished and if additional personnel and/or equipment is needed.

b. The assigned investigating officer or Incident Commander shall assign the tasks and responsibilities and shall authorize who may be in the crime scene.

c. cursory searches for suspects, victims, or for the protection of evidence under exigent circumstances, may be made with proper justification. However, a legal, extended crime scene search for physical evidence shall be made only with a valid search warrant or by a warrantless search as described in SOP LEG-005 "Warrantless Searches".

NOTE: A search warrant or an explicit, valid consent to conduct a crime scene search is essential even when there is no reason to believe the crime scene owner or occupant is involved.

4. Conduct an initial examination of the crime scene to evaluate the probative value of potential crime scene investigation activities

a. Walk through the crime scene to determine the potential elements. All members of the investigative team, if present, should participate and consider the following:

(1) Approach;

(2) Entry;

(3) Offense;

(4) Exit; and

(5) Escape.

b. Locate obvious items of physical evidence, such as, but not limited to:

(1) Footwear impressions

(2) Tire tread impressions; and

(3) Blood.

c. Protect those items which may be damaged or destroyed by the elements (i.e. wind, snow, rain, etc.).

d. Develop a hypotheses of the events which took place based on the physical evidence at the crime scene.

5. Document and examine the crime scene

a. Document the overall crime scene using photography, notes and sketching as necessary before physical evidence is collected or the crime scene is changed in any manner.

b. Examine the scene in an attempt to locate potential items of evidence.

NOTE: Video recordings may supplement the documentation of a scene, but video recordings shall not replace still photography. When technically photographing evidence, first photograph the evidence without a scale in the field of view and take additional photographs with a scale in the field of view so that size can be determined.

6. Collect and preserve the evidence

a. Recover potential items of evidence by:

(1) Packaging to prevent alteration and/or contamination; and

(2) Marking and sealing the packaging; and

(3) Establishing a chain of custody by completing a Property Record and Receipt form as noted in SOP LAB-001 “Evidence Submission Requirements—Use of the Property Record and Receipt Form”.

b. Collect materials and substances from known sources, whenever available, for submission to the laboratory for comparison analysis with the physical evidence items collected.

7. Conduct a final evaluation to complete a thorough investigation of the crime scene

a. Ensure all potential physical evidence is collected.

b. Ensure all equipment and materials generated during the investigation are removed from the crime scene.

c. Ensure the crime scene is properly released and the final exit is documented on the crime scene sign-in log.

B. The first responding officer must seriously consider the complexity of the situation and the skill/experience level necessary in order to successfully complete the Crime Scene Investigation Guidelines noted in this procedure. Therefore, the first responding officer may:

1. Complete the crime scene investigation alone; or
 2. Complete the crime scene investigation, with assistance from a CSI; or
 3. Relinquish responsibility of the crime scene investigation to a CSI, or to another officer assigned by the appropriate Commanding Officer, Incident Commander, or the assigned Investigating Officer.
- C. Department employees who collect an item of evidence shall initiate the chain of custody for the item by completing a Property Record and Receipt Form as required in SOP LAB-001, and ensure the item is properly packaged, sealed and marked.
- D. The Incident Commander or assigned investigating officer, after consultation with a CSI or a property officer, shall ensure all appropriate requests for laboratory analysis are made when the evidence is submitted to the laboratory for storage.
- E. This procedure is to be used in conjunction with all relevant Department regulations, rules, policies and procedures.