

MESA POLICE Department Policy Manual	Processing Evidence at Incident Scene	DPM 3.4.30 Effective 04/06/2012 Revised 09/19/2024
Approved by: Chief of Police	Chapter: Forensics Protocols	Page: 1 of 5

1. PURPOSE

This policy provides Mesa Police Department (MPD) members with guidelines for processing evidence at incident scenes. Where this policy conflicts with Forensic Services supplemental manuals, the Forensic Services procedures will take precedence for members assigned to Forensic Services.

2. GENERAL

2.1 Scene Processing

- A. Members assigned to perform the preliminary or other investigative processes of an incident scene are responsible for ensuring that:
 1. The scene is secure.
 2. Members who enter and depart the scene are documented.
 3. All obvious and potential evidence is protected.
- B. Forensic Services members may be contacted for technical assistance such as photography, processing, or interpretation of the scene.
 1. Crime Scene Specialists (CSS) should not be called to perform "routine" tasks regarding evidence collection and submissions (e.g., collection of found property, minor print processing, etc.).
- C. Tasks that on-scene members shall process or transport themselves include:
 1. Packaging and submission of routine evidence not requiring special handling and/or packing techniques.
 2. Property impounded as found or for safekeeping or destruction.
 3. Crime scenes requiring minimal latent fingerprint processing. If available, a CSS may be called for fingerprint processing.

3. SCENE PROTECTION

3.1 Member Responsibilities

- A. Arriving members are responsible for:
 1. Protection of the scene and all potential evidence at that scene.
 - a. Once a member arrives at a scene, the scene shall not be left until:
 - Another member arrives to secure the scene.
 - All processing and evidence collection is complete.
 - b. If photos are to be taken or other processing is necessary, the scene should not be disturbed until photos have been taken.

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2. Ensuring the scene is evaluated for all possible evidence and the proper steps for its documentation, preservation, and submission are taken. Consideration should be given to evidence such as:
 - a. Shoe and tire print impressions.
 - b. Latent fingerprint processing.
 - c. Blood spatter interpretation.
 - d. Trajectory.
 - e. DNA.
 - f. Trace evidence.
 - g. Physical evidence that may be expected to degrade or disappear within a particular time frame.

3.2 Protecting Evidence

- A. Measures should be taken to protect the evidence at the crime scene and during its collection from contamination that would affect laboratory analysis.
 1. Disposable gloves should be worn to protect the evidence during collection.
 - a. Gloves should be changed when:
 - They become contaminated with body fluids.
 - Torn, punctured, or when the barrier has become compromised.
 - Between the handling of one item to another item of evidence.
 - b. Disposable gloves shall be worn while processing evidence for latent prints. Cloth gloves alone should not be worn.
 2. Clothing that becomes contaminated shall be changed as soon as feasible. Further information on decontamination of clothing may be found in [DPM 1.2.145 Health Hazard Incidents – Prevention & Decontamination](#).
 3. Items should be kept physically separated during collection, packaging, and analysis.
 4. Crime scene evidence should be handled at a different time and/or in a different space from standard/known samples.

4. PROCESSING EVIDENCE IN THE FIELD

4.1 Photographing Scene & Processing

- A. Photographs will depict the scene as found, including all items of physical evidence to be collected.
- B. Members who photograph incident scenes shall be trained in crime scene photography and be familiar with the operation of equipment provided for that purpose. Refer to [DPM 3.4.15 Evidentiary Recordings](#) for additional information.
- C. Only Department authorized equipment is to be used to take photographs.

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- D. Prior to the collection and preservation of evidence, photographs are taken of the scene indicating the physical evidence's relationship to the overall scene and other items within the scene, with the exception of potential loss of evidence.
- E. Forensic Services should be contacted to photograph or process the following types of evidence.
 - 1. Shoeprints and/or impressions.
 - 2. Tire prints and/or impressions.
 - 3. Tool marks.
 - 4. Blood spatter.
 - 5. Latent prints on surfaces that require special processing or cannot be lifted using powder methods without destroying the print.
 - 6. Visible prints that require comparative photography.
 - 7. Presence or lack of injuries in all felony assault type cases.
 - 8. Serious injuries and death investigations when an Office of the Medical Examiner (OME) Investigator is responding, or under other suspicious circumstances.
 - 9. All evidence which may require photographic enlargement to scale.
- F. Regardless of the ownership of the photographic equipment, any photographs taken as physical evidence are the property of MPD. Refer to [DPM 3.4.15 Evidentiary Recordings](#) for submission of photographs.

4.2 Photographic Guidelines for Release of Property

- A. It is the intent of the MPD to release property from non-violent crimes to the lawful owner, or other party authorized to take possession, at the scene or before the conclusion of the criminal case, after the following conditions have been met:
 - 1. A photograph is taken of the property and owner/representative together.
 - 2. An additional photograph is taken of any unique marks, distinguishing characteristics, serial numbers, or evidence tags on the property.
 - 3. All photographs shall include a sign displaying the Department case number.
 - 4. Photographs shall be color, taken with a digital camera capable of reproducing sufficient detail as to show identifying marks and serial numbers.
 - 5. All items released shall be documented in a departmental report/supplement.
 - 6. The release of items shall be captured on On-Officer Body Camera (OBC).
 - a. If OBC is not available, [DPM 3.4.30F7 Photograph & Release of Property Receipt](#) shall be completed in duplicate.

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- The original copy shall be submitted to the Criminal Justice Information Division (CJID) to be attached to the case.
 - A copy shall be given to the owner/authorized party.
7. Prior to release, all serialized property shall be cleared from NCIC.
 8. Photographs taken for the release of property shall be entered into Digital EMS.

4.3 Photographic Release of Property Restrictions

- A. Photographic release of property shall not apply to the following:
 1. Property seized by search warrant.
 2. Money.
 3. Explosives.
 4. Hazardous materials or illegal substances.
 5. Narcotics and other illicit drugs.
 6. Firearms or weapons used in the commission of a crime.
 7. Evidence requiring laboratory analysis.
 8. Any property in which ownership is in dispute.
 9. Property that is evidence of a violent offense.
 10. Evidence resulting from a persons crime.

4.4 Fingerprints

- A. Members not assigned to Forensic Services shall only use powder methods for development. It is recommended that a dust/particle mask be worn when processing with powder.
- B. A CSS shall be contacted for latent prints that must be photographed.
- C. If it is not practical for latent prints to be photographed or processed in the field, the items shall be submitted to the Evidence & Supply Section as outlined in [DPM 3.2.45 Impounding Evidence & Property](#).
- D. Chemical and forensic light source processing will be done by Forensic Services members.
- E. Members shall wear gloves when processing evidence to ensure that evidence is not contaminated with fingerprints or other contaminants.
- F. Members shall ensure that all the required information about the lifted latent print is contained in the appropriate spaces on the information side of the lift card, including a written description of the item/surface.
- G. Latent print cards completed by non-Forensic Services members shall be submitted to the Evidence & Supply Section in a sealed latent envelope. Refer to [DPM 3.2.45 Impounding Evidence & Property](#)
 1. When submitting latent print cards, all cards submitted from the same scene, regardless of location obtained from (i.e., fingerprints lifted from a vehicle and a residence) should be submitted in one envelope only. Do not submit in multiple envelopes.

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4.5 Scene Sketch

- A. If necessary, the member responsible for the scene ensures that a crime scene sketch is made prior to the collection of evidence. Basic elements that can be included in the sketch are:
 1. Dimensions of the crime scene.
 2. Relation of the crime scene to other buildings, geographical features, or roads.
 3. Appropriate address, floor, or room number.
 4. Location of significant features of the scene, including the victim.
 5. Date and time of preparation.
 6. Name(s) of person(s) preparing the sketch.
 7. Direction of north.
 8. Location of physical items of evidence recovered.
 9. Any additional information that is pertinent to the investigation.
 10. Rough sketches and measurements shall include sufficient additional information that allows a final scale drawing at a later time.

4.6 Tool Marks & Shoe & Tire Prints

- A. If appropriate, Forensic Services shall be contacted to photograph and process tool marks and/or collect shoe and tire prints/impressions.
- B. Members responsible for the scene should ensure that suspect shoes, tires, and/or tools are seized and protected to prevent alteration or destruction of evidence.
- C. Members responsible for the scene should ensure that Forensic Services members are notified of any exemplars needed of officers', firefighters', or other witnesses' shoes or tires that may be needed for elimination purposes.
- D. Refer to [DPM 3.4.5F1 Request for Forensic Examination](#) to request comparison analysis for shoe and tire prints. Forensic Services may be contacted for assistance with this request.

REFERENCES

- [DPM 1.2.145 Health Hazard Incidents – Prevention & Decontamination](#)
- [DPM 3.2.45 Impounding Evidence & Property](#)
- [DPM 3.4.5F1 Request for Forensic Examination](#)
- [DPM 3.4.15 Evidentiary Recordings](#)
- [DPM 3.4.30F7 Photograph & Release of Property Receipt](#)