

# MERIDIAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

Subject: <b>CRIME SCENE RESPONSE AND CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS</b>	General Order: 906
Effective Date: March 23, 2018 Revision Date: November 9, 2022	Distribution: Sworn Employees

## I. PURPOSE

To identify responsibilities and investigative processes within the patrol and investigative components of the Department.

## II. POLICY

It is the policy of this Department to manage the function of criminal investigations in an effective and efficient manner by coordinating the efforts of patrol, investigative and other organizational components.

## III. PROCEDURES

Revised

Most investigations begin with the preliminary investigation conducted by a patrol officer by recording information and interviewing victims, witnesses, etc. Depending on the nature and severity of the crime and complexity of the crime scene, a follow-up investigation conducted by the Investigative Unit may be initiated.

### A. Preliminary Investigation

Activities during the preliminary investigation shall center on the protection of persons, collection of evidence, apprehension of criminals at or near the crime scene and solving the reported crime. During the preliminary investigation, officers shall perform the following duties in the order and to the degree appropriate to the incident;

1. Make the crime scene safe to the extent which the circumstances allow.
2. Notify the Ingham 911 Dispatch Center concerning injured parties and any dangerous conditions present, and request appropriate medical assistance and additional equipment, services, or personnel as needed.
3. Assist the injured pending arrival of EMS personnel. In serious cases, an officer shall be assigned to accompany the victim or the suspect to the hospital and remain with him or her to record information on the incident.

Revised

4. Make a preliminary determination of whether a crime has been committed by completing, at a minimum:
  - a. An initial statement from any witness, victim, or complainant

- b. A cursory examination for evidence
  5. Take written notes and conduct voice and video recordings whenever possible.
  6. Establish a crime scene perimeter, and secure the crime scene to the extent possible. Take into account the deterioration of the crime scene due to weather or other contamination. (Refer to Appendix A Preliminary Investigation Checklist).
- B. Preliminary Investigation Case Management
  1. Patrol officers shall pursue preliminary investigations to the full extent of their available time, investigative training, and geography. In most minor property crimes and simple assaults, patrol personnel should assume responsibility of the crime scene and conduct any on-scene and follow up investigation that may be deemed necessary.
  2. The preliminary investigation shall, whenever practicable, be completed by the end of the shift in which it occurs. The supervisor of the shift shall review, approve as appropriate, and forward the preliminary investigative report to the Investigations Unit.
  3. In exceptional instances, when circumstances prevent the timely completion of the investigation, the supervisor shall ensure that the initial incident report is completed prior to the end of the officer's tour of duty, thereby ensuring that the Investigative Unit is aware of the incident and has the necessary information to initiate a follow-up investigation if warranted.
- C. Investigative Personnel at the Crime Scene
  1. Investigative personnel shall be notified if there is a need for immediate investigation at the crime scene via a request from the on-duty patrol supervisor as circumstances dictate and consistent with the provisions of General Order 105 for Command Notification of Incidents. Requests for investigative assistance at the crime scene shall be based on the following primary factors:
    - a. The seriousness or complexity of the crime
    - b. Where a "hot" lead requires immediate attention
    - c. The dangerousness of the crime scene

- d. Level of patrol officer expertise in crime scene processing and the availability of appropriate crime scene processing equipment and/or personnel for photography, evidence collection, and related tasks
  - e. Where the crime may serve as a link to another crime
  - f. Staffing availability and call activity for patrol personnel.
2. The Investigative Unit shall upon arrival assume responsibility for oversight and completion of all investigations for all major crime scenes. The investigative supervisor shall have authority to establish priorities and make decisions regarding witnesses and suspects, recording of statements and collection of physical evidence, making on-site arrests, applying for warrants, and all other activities relevant to a comprehensive investigation of the incident.
  3. Circumstances permitting, the patrol supervisor may assign patrol officers to assist investigative personnel. In such instances, these officers are responsible to the on-scene investigative supervisor.
- D. Evidence Technicians at the Crime Scene
1. Evidence Technicians may be notified to assist a patrol officer or investigative personnel with the processing of the crime scene. Requests for assistance shall be based upon the following primary factors.
    - a. The seriousness or complexity of the crime scene.
    - b. The level of patrol officer's expertise in crime scene processing.
    - c. Where the crime scene may serve as a link to another crime.
    - d. Staffing availability and call activity for patrol personnel.
  2. Requests for on-duty Evidence Technicians shall be determined by the on-duty patrol supervisor as circumstances dictate.
  3. Requests for off-duty Evidence Technicians shall be determined by the on-duty supervisor. Authorizations shall be consistent with the provisions of General Order 105 for Command Notification of Incidents.
- E. Investigative Supervisor Follow Up

The Investigative Supervisor shall review the preliminary investigation and make a determination of additional investigative activities that are required. These activities may include but are not limited to any or all of the following in the order deemed appropriate:

- Enter wanted persons, stolen vehicles, and serial number stolen property into NCIC.
- Conduct initial or follow-up interviews with witnesses and suspects.
- Make notifications and coordinate with other jurisdictions or governmental law enforcement agencies.
- Search for new witnesses.
- Complete background checks on witnesses, victims, and suspects as appropriate.
- Conducting surveillance, interrogation, or identification procedures.
- Present evidence and statements to the prosecutor's office to obtain arrest or search warrants.
- Prepare and execute search or arrest warrants.
- Attend and retrieve evidence at autopsies.
- Develop exhibits for presentation in court including latent/patent fingerprint charts, crime scene sketches, and photographs.
- Interview suspects.
- Search for and recover stolen property.
- Submit items for forensic examination.
- Arrange for polygraph examinations.
- Seek additional information from other officers, informants, contacts in the community, and other investigators and agencies.
- Identify recent prison releases into the community.
- Seek additional information from police agency records regarding suspects, witnesses, or past incidents at or near the location of the crime.
- Seek additional information from records including motor vehicle, driver's licenses, social security, employee records, and credit files.
- Track the source of all firearms.
- Contact confidential informants and coordinate with departmental and regional intelligence databases.
- Notify victims and witnesses when their presence is required in court.

New

1. The Investigative Unit Supervisor shall screen all criminal incident reports and determine if a case should be assigned to an investigator for further investigation or if the case can be considered inactive. The decision to assign cases shall be based on their seriousness and in accordance with priorities based on the presence of the following solvability factors:
  - a. Suspect in custody.

- b. Suspect named or known.
- c. Unique suspect identifiers.
- d. Vehicle in custody.
- e. Unique vehicle identifiers.
- f. General suspect description.
- g. General vehicle description.
- h. Unique method or crime pattern.
- i. Significant physical evidence.
- j. Traceable stolen property.
- k. Witnesses.

- New 2. Investigations shall remain active as long as leads are not exhausted, resources are not needed on more serious cases, and one or more of the following avenues of investigation appear promising:
- a. Suspect information.
  - b. Physical Evidence.
  - c. Vehicle description and license plate information.
- New 3. Investigation of minor property crimes shall generally not be conducted or shall be discontinued when sufficient solvability factors are not available. In such cases, victims shall be informed of the decision.
- a. However, exceptional or sensitive cases may be assigned for follow-up by the Investigations Supervisor, regardless of the availability of the solvability factors.
- New 4. The Investigations Unit Supervisor shall maintain an assignment log in the department computer system. The log shall document the investigator assigned, the date assigned, the complaint number, the offense, and the disposition.
- New 5. Monthly activity or productivity reports shall be provided by Investigators, and monthly summary reports of case status and unit productivity shall

be developed by the Investigative Supervisor and provided to the Services Division Commander.

- Revised F. Investigations Unit Reporting
1. Each case file shall be assigned a unique number. As follow-up reports are completed, the original copy shall be filed in the Records Division. Copies of all follow-up reports from active cases shall be filed in the Investigative Unit and shall be accessible to all investigative personnel unless otherwise instructed by the Investigative Supervisor.
  2. The investigator assigned to a case shall maintain a case folder that mirrors the report in the Records Management System. Reports will be reviewed and assigned a status at the completion of the investigation.
- Revised
3. While a case is being investigated it shall remain as "Active" in the records management system. At the conclusion of an investigation, the investigations unit supervisor shall assign a case status from the following:
    - a. Closed: An arrest has been made, or a warrant issued, and the prosecutor or township attorney is handling the case.
    - b. Inactive: When all potential leads have been exhausted an investigation may be classified as inactive. An investigation may be reactivated and assigned to an investigator if sufficient new leads are developed.
    - c. Unfounded: The offense did not occur.
    - d. Active: An ongoing investigation.
    - e. Exceptional Clearance: Examples of this would be that the victim does not wish to prosecute or the suspect in the incident is deceased.
- Revised
4. Documents obtained during an investigation shall be provided to the records division to be scanned and added to the records management system and associated with the report. Access to these reports is restricted through the use of an individual user login, and can be audited to determine who has access a report.
- Revised
5. Investigation unit case files shall include a full copy of the report and copies of documents provided to the records division to be scanned in. Case files will be retained for that calendar year plus an additional two years before they are destroyed. Note: Investigative case notes for major

crimes, as determined by the investigations unit supervisor, and homicides will be retained indefinitely.

Revised

6. All active and retained case files will be secured in the investigations unit until their scheduled destruction date.

Revised

7. In the event that an investigation involves information that should not be available for review by members of the department, those records can be restricted at the request of the investigations unit supervisor, either division commander, or the chief of police.

8. Victims and the preliminary investigating officers shall be kept appropriately informed of the status of case investigations on a regular basis by the assigned investigator.

9. The Investigative Unit shall prioritize the arrest and prosecution of repeat offenders through post arrest screening of suspects and coordination of prosecution efforts with the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office using such tactics as stakeouts, surveillance, and informants.

10. The Investigative Unit shall adhere to the tenets of community policing and problem solving to which this department subscribes. As such, investigative officers shall be responsible for the identification of crime trends and problems that may be addressed by measures not limited to Arrest (i.e. communication with patrol officers and community/neighborhood leaders).

11. All reports screened by the Ingham County Prosecutor's Office will be tracked by the Meridian Township Court Services Officer. The warrant log will be maintained and reviewed quarterly by the Investigations Supervisor.

12. All investigative action shall be documented in a written report including the final disposition of the investigation.

G. Victim notification.


1. Victims shall be notified via letter if their incident will not be investigated do to the fact there are no solvability factors.

2. If the incident is assigned to an investigator, the investigator shall notify the victim the case has been assigned and be in contact with the victim as to the progress and if the case has been made inactive due to a lack of investigative leads.

#### IV. CANCELLATIONS

None

Authorized by:



Ken Plaga, Chief of Police

Index as:

Crime Scene Response and Criminal Investigation  
Evidence Technicians Callout & Use  
Preliminary Investigations (General)  
Solvability Factors  
Standard 3.2.1  
Standard 4.1.1

*Application: This directive constitutes department policy, and is not intended to enlarge the employer's or employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It shall not be construed as the creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense with respect to third party claims insofar as the employer's or employee's legal duty as imposed by law.*

**Appendix A**  
**Preliminary Investigation Checklist**

- Notify a supervisor if the immediate presence of a criminal Investigator is deemed necessary.
- Arrest and advise suspects of their constitutional rights using the "Advice of Rights" form and record any spontaneous utterances verbatim.
- If a suspect or suspects have fled the scene, provide communications with their names, addresses, or locations if known and their descriptions including clothing, vehicle(s) used, and whether they are considered armed.
- Create a log to document the time of arrival and departure of emergency and investigative personnel.
- Locate, separate, and identify witnesses for possible follow-up contact. Obtain name, alias, date of birth, home address, home and work phone numbers, and cellular phone number if available. Conduct basic interviews as time and circumstances permit.
- As time permits and priorities allow, check with neighboring businesses and residents as well as friends and relatives of the victim who may be available and who are routine visitors to the location where the crime occurred.
- Notify the scene supervisor when unusual circumstances are present such as a second crime scene or when other immediate investigative or related actions need to be taken.
- Complete a neighborhood canvas and record which neighbors are at home and may be so situated as to have information pertinent to the investigation.
- Complete all written reports as soon as possible and in serious cases by the end of the shift. Initial and supplemental reports of the incident should include but not be limited to the following information:
  - Date and time of arrival at the scene
  - Relevant weather or situational conditions and observations upon arrival at the scene
  - Circumstances of how the crime was discovered and reported
  - Identity of other officers or emergency personnel at the scene
  - Description of injuries sustained by victim(s) and others
  - Physical evidence present at the scene and the officer(s) responsible for its collection and storage
  - Name, addresses, and telephone numbers of victims, witnesses, and suspects
  - Spontaneous statements made by victims, witnesses, or suspects
  - Results of interviews with complainants, victims, or witnesses to include the identity or description of suspects

- Diagrams, sketches, photographs, video or audio recordings taken, and the identity of the recording officer
- Details relating to search warrants
- Property damage
- Stolen property descriptions, serial numbers or other markings or identifiable characteristics as available
- Time the crime scene was released
- Recommendations for further investigation or action