
CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

6100.1 PURPOSE

This procedure provides guidelines for processing a crime scene. There is no single particular way to process a crime scene since each scene is unique and possesses its own distinct facts, circumstances, and challenges. This procedure provides basic guidelines on how to approach, accurately document, and thoroughly process any crime scene regardless of crime type.

Personnel responsible for the forensic investigation of a crime scene shall adhere to the following guidelines. Their actions or inactions should be based on the particulars of each scene crime and firmly rooted in accepted forensic practices.

6100.2 GENERAL APPROACH TO SCENE PROCEDURE

Prior to responding to a crime scene, personnel responsible for the forensic investigation of the scene should:

1. Ensure that all equipment believed necessary to properly process the scene is present and functioning.
2. Determine whether additional CSI personnel will be required.
3. Be aware of how much daylight, if any, will be left upon arrival at the scene.
4. Determine whether a search warrant will be required before you are allowed scene access.

Upon arriving at a crime scene, personnel responsible for the forensic investigation should always stay to the perimeter of the scene so as not to disturb any physical evidence that may be present. Personnel should also determine an appropriate pathway for scene entry and exit and a geographic work/meeting area to best preserve the scene and its contents.

If applicable, the forensic investigator shall check-in with the officer in charge of maintaining perimeter security and control prior to breaching the scene's perimeter. If this has not been completed and the forensic investigator believes perimeter control is warranted, this is the time to arrange it via a request to officers on scene or Communications.

If applicable, the forensic investigator shall confer with the first responding officer(s) and/or the detective in-charge of the crime scene. The forensic investigator shall ask for a verbal description of the circumstances of the scene. He/she must gather sufficient information to develop a plan of action for the processing of the crime scene, including but not limited to the following inquires

1. What happened?
2. What evidence has already been located?
3. What information do witnesses have?
4. Has anything been moved or handled since discovering the crime?
5. Who has been inside the crime scene prior to the forensic investigator's arrival?

Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Procedures Manual

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

6100.3 DOCUMENTATION

Once inside the crime scene personnel responsible for the forensic investigation shall sufficiently document the scene. Documentation will always include accurate and complete note-taking and may include photography, videography, sketches, diagrams, and/or Leica 3D scan. The notes taken at scene will become the basis for all the information formalized within the report the forensic investigator will generate later. "Sufficiency of documentation" shall be defined as that which adequately achieves the purpose of thoroughly recording the crime scene and its contents as read or observed by a party not present at the scene.

Documentation of scenes where violent offenses have occurred shall be documented, at minimum, with sufficient photography, sketch, and measurement. Documentation of scenes involving a sexual assault, major injury, death, or an officer involved shooting with no one hit shall always include a sketch, diagram, measurements and Leica 3D scan of the scene.

Low light scenes, inside or out, warranting time-exposure photography shall be photographed in that manner.

Information that shall be collected at every crime scene, where applicable and regardless of crime type, shall include:

1. Date and time of arrival.
2. Time of departure.
3. Location of scene.
4. Description of scene location.
5. Case number and if applicable, outside agency case number(s).
6. Coroner case number, if applicable.
7. Name(s) of victim(s).
8. Name(s) of suspect(s) and/or arrestee(s).
9. Type of crime.
10. Date and time of occurrence (if obtainable).
11. Name of handling detective and/or officer.
12. Name(s) of additional scene personnel.
13. Observations of the scene (i.e. lighting conditions, weather, temperature, positions of light switches, doors, windows, etc).
14. Locations and descriptions of evidence found (may include measurements, placard numbers, etc).
15. Any interpretations derived from the found evidence, when/if possible.
16. Statement of where evidence was released (chain of custody).

While at the scene and during processing, the forensic investigator should continuously try to think through and reconstruct the actions of both victim(s) and perpetrator(s). It should be noted

Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Procedures Manual

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

that due to an insufficiency in physical evidence present at the scene, it might not be possible to accurately reconstruct all these actions.

If the possibility exists that evidence may be destroyed (i.e. blown or washed away, etc.), every reasonable effort should be made to photograph, document with measurements, and collect the evidence as soon as possible, leaving an evidence placard in its place when appropriate.

Immediately note and appropriately document transient evidence (i.e. condensation on a glass, melting ice cream, warm coffee, odors, sprinklers, automatic light timers, etc.).

6100.4 SCENE SEARCHING

Once inside the crime scene, personnel responsible for the forensic investigation shall conduct a complete and thorough search of the scene.

Personnel should complete a preliminary walk-through of the scene with the scene detective or handling officer, noting readily visible items of potential evidence. The walk-through should provide an understanding of the scene as a whole and advance the forensic investigator's understanding of the additional resources that will be necessary if any, as well as direct him/her to immediately deal with changing scene circumstances that are beyond his/her control (i.e. weather conditions, lighting, etc.). This preliminary walk-through serves as an organizational staging for the entire scene-processing plan of action. The walk-through should be conducted with as little personnel as possible so as to minimize uncoordinated and unrecorded operations. The primary goals of the preliminary walk-through are as follows:

1. To take preliminary photographs.
2. To delineate the extent of the search area, which may result in the expansion of the initial scene perimeter.
3. To organize search priorities and procedures needed, recognizing special problem areas.
4. To further determine personnel and equipment needs and create specific assignments.
5. To identify, document, and protect transient physical evidence.
6. To make extensive notes to document the scene, physical and environmental conditions, assignments, movement of personnel, etc.

The best search options are typically the most difficult and time-consuming. Physical evidence cannot be overly documented. Personnel should always start with a cautious search of visible areas, avoiding evidence loss and/or contamination, and then complete a vigorous search of concealed areas. Search preparation should include the following:

1. A search warrant, if applicable.
2. A briefing with search personnel discussing scene assignments. Specific individuals should be assigned specific areas to search with no roaming.

Santa Ana Police Department

Santa Ana PD Procedures Manual

CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION

3. Establish an incident action plan and on large or complicated scenes, a Command Post for communication and decision-making.
4. Using a search pattern, such as a grid, strip or lane or spiral.
5. Complete the general search of the scene prior to delving into specialty reviews such as trajectory or bloodstain pattern analysis.
6. Don't forget to look up. Evidence can be found in unusual places.

6100.5 SCENE EVIDENCE COLLECTION

Once evidence has been identified, personnel responsible for the forensic investigation shall collect the evidence in the following manner:

1. Document the evidence including description, location, time of collection, the name of the individual who located it, etc, via notes, photography, measurements, etc.
2. If applicable, mark the evidence locations on the sketch.
3. Change gloves often and wear a mask if applicable.
4. Do not excessively handle the evidence after collection.
5. Package the evidence at the scene as to prevent contamination.
6. Consider and collect known standards, if applicable (i.e. hairs, fibers, paint scrapings, buccal swabs, etc.).
7. **Never** package known standards with unknown crime scene samples.

6100.6 SCENE CONCLUSION

Once evidence has been collected, personnel responsible for the forensic investigation shall complete a final survey of the scene, documentation, photographs taken, sketches made, etc. The purpose of the survey is to review all aspects of the search, making sure the scene has been completely and accurately recorded, all evidence has been identified and collected, all processing equipment has been retrieved, and to ensure hiding places or difficult access areas have not been overlooked. Personnel should ensure that all documentation is accurate and complete.

Once the scene is released, a search warrant may be necessary to regain entry. Personnel should document the release of the scene (time, date, who by, etc.) by the handling officer or detective, if applicable.