

545 **CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATIONS**

- I. **PURPOSE:** To train and coordinate the efforts of the police officer, Forensic Investigation Unit personnel, and latent investigator concerning the following crime scene procedures:
- A. Recognize and identify a crime scene and locate evidence therein;
 - B. Collect the evidence discovered;
 - C. Preserve the evidence discovered;
 - D. Identify and interview witnesses;
 - E. Identify the suspects and link the suspects to the scene, the evidence and the crime; and
 - F. Utilize the crime scene and evidence towards a successful conclusion of a criminal case.

- II. **DISCUSSION:** The protection and processing of the crime scene is the first order of business in police work and clearly of utmost importance. The crime scene is defined as "the area within the immediate vicinity in which evidence might be found".

Theoretically, the judge and jury should be able to go to the crime scene and inspect it for themselves. Effective case prosecution requires that the scene be reproduced in court to the extent reasonably possible; therefore, it is necessary to process the scene until sufficient evidence is developed to satisfy case requirements.

III. **GENERAL PROCEDURES:**

- A. The responding officer should prevent any possible disturbances to the crime scene, protecting it until all evidence has been collected, or in major crimes, until the arrival of Forensic Investigation Unit personnel and/or latent investigators. Such disturbances include:
 - 1. Curious people, including well meaning citizens trying to assist, or uninvolved police officers;
 - 2. Intentional alteration of the scene to conceal a crime, to simulate a crime for personal reasons, to confuse or discredit investigators, or to steal incriminating evidence; and

3. Weather conditions, which might destroy or damage evidence.
- B. If a Crime Scene Technician is responding, notate the location of evidence without introducing items to the scene. The Crime Scene Technician will photograph, mark and collect the evidence. If a Crime Scene Technician is not utilized, photograph and collect evidence marking the container that identifies it as evidence and who collected it.
 - C. Upon recovery of evidence, the applicable report will include a complete description of the evidence, where located or from whom obtained, and who recovered or collected the items.
 - D. Each time there is a transfer of custody of evidence said transfer will be documented on the applicable form (offense, supplement or evidence - property receipt). This documentation shall include date and time, persons involved, and reasons for transfer.
 - E. Evidence should be transported carefully to avoid damage or destruction.
 - F. The investigator will always ascertain whether or not the evidence has been moved since the commission of the crime. A record must be made of all changes at the scene of the crime.
 - G. The investigator should consider as important evidence anything which might lead to the identification of the perpetrator, the exclusion of possible suspects, or to the manner in which the crime was committed. These include: fingerprints, footprints, tire tracks, tools, traces of tools, weapons, fired casings, bullets, personal property, clothing, broken headlamps, glass, narcotics, blood, hairs, seminal stains, tooth marks, discarded food items, and handwriting.
 - H. The Tampa Police Department fully adopts the procedures of the FDLE Crime Laboratory system as set out in the current edition of the FDLE Evidence Submission Manual, and the guidelines of the FBI Crime Lab.
 - I. All personnel who process a crime/accident scene or evidence will document their actions in the appropriate report. This documentation will be sufficient to render the information legally admissible and useful.
 - J. During the processing of a scene, the officer or detective in charge, will supervise the activities of the Crime Scene Technician (CST), who is trained in evidence and scene processing. The officer or detective shall inform the CST as to the particulars of the case and highlight what specific tasks must be undertaken. The CST will not be left alone at crime scenes.

K. If photographs are not taken or physical evidence is not recovered at the scene of a serious crime, the investigator will document the reasons for same in the appropriate report.

L. If photographs are taken, the photographer will document the following in the report: type of camera; type of film, including ASA speed if non-digital; lens description; date; and times identifying the beginning and ending of the photographic session. A brief description of the subject matter will also be documented.

When photographing, overalls of the scene depicting the location and evidence should be taken first. Evidentiary articles should be photographed before removing them. It is desirable that the Crime Scene Technician performs the photography, under the guidance of the investigator. When in doubt as to whether an article should be photographed or not, photograph it.

M. When necessary, officers will attempt to locate additional witnesses by conducting a neighborhood survey.

IV. MAJOR CRIME PROCEDURES:

A. The responding officers should protect the scene by first clearing the area and keeping it cleared. Officers should be posted at doors, gates, and other entryways to prevent unauthorized persons from entering the scene. Officers posted at entryways to crime scenes will identify and make a log of all persons entering and exiting the crime scenes with the corresponding times. This log becomes a supplement to the report.

B. The officers first responding to the scene should locate any potential persons who may have information related to the investigation and separate them from one another. Confirm the persons' identities and obtain means to contact those persons in the future. Obtain and record any witness statements, including via audio, video, or written format if possible.

C. Once the latent investigators arrive, responsibility for the crime scene will be assigned in accordance with department policy, as dictated by the seriousness of the offense. Officers will continue to coordinate their efforts with other personnel as directed by the on-scene supervisor.

Detectives should direct the crime scene technicians and/or officers in collecting and preserving evidence.

D. To assist in laboratory analysis, evidence shall be of sufficient sample size for testing. Comparison samples of materials and substances will be

collected when possible. When requests for examination are made, a request for written results of the lab analysis should be included. The latent investigator assigned to the case will be responsible for requesting any examinations and ensuring that proper procedures are utilized.

- E. Officers are often called to draw a crime-scene sketch. The following will be included:
 - 1. Measurements/dimensions;
 - 2. Relation of the crime scene to other buildings, geographical features, or roads;
 - 3. Address, floor, room number, and type of building, where applicable;
 - 4. Location of significant features of the scene to include the victim and all physical evidence;
 - 5. Any other item deemed relevant to the offense, scene, or situation;
 - 6. Direction of north; and
 - 7. Identification of preparers along with date and time of preparation.

V. GUIDELINES FOR THE CRIME SCENE TECHNICIAN:

- A. Respond in a timely manner which is regarded as being within an hour of the original request.
- B. Bring all of the appropriate equipment and supplies necessary to process the crime scene efficiently.
- C. Follow the directions of the investigator in charge of the crime scene.
- D. Interact with the investigator regarding any new and specialized knowledge the crime scene technician may have received in specialized training.

Supersedes SOP 545, dated 9/21.