



# CRIME SCENE PROCESSING

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## Contents:

- I. Policy
- II. Definitions
- III. Responsibilities
- IV. Evidence Collection and Processing Techniques
- V. DNA Evidence
- VI. Inventory and Chain of Custody of Evidence
- VII. Processing of Certain Crime Scenes Required
- VIII. Crime Scenes Not Routinely Processed
- IX. Processing Search and Seizure Warrant Scenes
- X. Protecting/Securing the Crime Scene
- XI. Evidence Markers
- XII. Crime Scene Search and Preliminary Survey
- XIII. Report of the Crime Scene Processor
- XIV. Crime Scene Sketch
- XV. Recovered Property at Crime Scenes
- XVI. Contaminated Property
- XVII. ***Cooperation With Other Agencies***
- XVIII. Proponent Unit
- XIV. Cancellation

## **I. POLICY**

- A. It is the policy of the department to provide 24-hour crime scene & evidence collection services.
- B. The proper search of a crime scene for physical evidence is a critical part of the criminal investigation. The ability of the investigating officer to identify what constitutes probative or viable physical evidence, and to properly secure and preserve it for trial is essential to the investigation of the crime and the prosecution of offenders. At the crime scene, every officer shares the responsibility of collecting as much pertinent physical evidence as possible. Certain procedures must be followed in the processing and preservation of evidence in order to ensure that its value for laboratory examination will not be adversely affected and that it will be admissible in court.

## **II. DEFINITIONS**

- A. Evidence - Anything that bears on or tends to prove the points in question. For the purpose of this code the term "evidence" means physical or tangible evidence - objects, fingerprints, bodily fluids or parts, impressions made on other objects, photographs, etc.
- B. Chain of Custody - The continuity of custody for items collected as physical evidence. This continuity must be established in order to prove that items or materials offered as evidence during a trial are the same items or materials collected at the crime scene during processing.
- C. Crime Scene Processing - The specific actions taken at the scene of a crime or accident; consisting of the taking of photographs, preparing a sketch of a crime or accident scene, and the collection and preservation of physical evidence.

- D. Crime Scene Technician - The technician assigned to the Evidence Collection Unit who is responsible for processing a crime scene.
- E. Field Fingerprint Officer - A sworn officer, having completed a prescribed training course, who is responsible for processing minor crime scenes. (Required equipment - latent fingerprint kit)
- F. Crime Scene Processor - The person, either a Crime Scene Technician or a police officer, who processes a crime scene.
- G. Contamination- The undesirable transfer of DNA/biological or other material to physical evidence from another source.
- H. Cross Contamination-The undesirable transfer of material between two or more sources of physical evidence.
- I. Biological Evidence- Evidence commonly recovered from crime scenes in the form of hair, tissue, bones, teeth, blood or other bodily fluids and cellular material.
- J. Contaminated Property- Recovered or found (non-evidentiary) property that has been in contact with blood or other potentially infectious materials.
- K. Single-Use Equipment- Items that will be used only once to collect evidence, such as biological samples, then discarded to minimize contamination (e.g., tweezers, scalpel blades, droppers.)
- L. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)- Articles such as disposable (latex) gloves, masks, shoe covers and eye protection that are utilized to provide a barrier to keep biological or chemical hazards from contacting the skin, eyes, and mucous membranes and to avoid contamination of the crime scene.
- M. DNA (Deoxyribonucleic Acid)- The molecule that encodes genetic information. DNA is a chemical substance contained in cells that determines each person's individual characteristics. An individual's DNA is unique except in cases of identical twins.
- N. Known Source- Specimen from an identified source. For DNA, it is a buccal (oral) swabbing from a known/identified person.

### **III. RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. For incidents requiring scene processing and evidence collection by the Evidence Collection Unit, the investigating officer will promptly request that a Crime Scene Technician be dispatched. The request may be made via Communications. The investigating officer will remain at the scene and ensure that the crime scene is protected from contamination until the arrival of the Crime Scene Technician.
- B. For incidents to which the Evidence Collection Unit has responded, the responsibility for the collection, preservation, and identification of physical evidence rests with the Crime Scene Technician assigned to the Evidence Collection Unit. If the Evidence Collection Unit is not involved in the incident, the investigating officer or Field Fingerprint Officer is responsible for the collection and proper handling of evidence.
- C. Through daily informal and monthly documented formal inspections, Platoon Commanders and Supervisors are responsible to ensure officers who have been trained to be Field Fingerprint Officers have their issued latent fingerprint kits stocked with needed supplies. Supplies for latent fingerprint kits may be restocked by the Evidence Collection Unit. Note: All officers who have attended the Anne Arundel County Police Department Entry Level Training Academy Program since 2001 are trained Field Fingerprint Officers and have been issued a latent fingerprint kit.

### **IV. EVIDENCE COLLECTION AND PROCESSING TECHNIQUES**

The following general requirements apply to the collection and processing of physical evidence in the field, regardless of the type of crime under investigation:

- A. All evidence must be collected legally in order to be admissible in court.
- B. At the time it is found, evidence should be displayed to another investigator, if possible, so that both individuals may testify as to its source.
- C. All evidence should be fully described in the investigator's notes and photographed in place prior to being picked up. Evidence may be identified in photographs and notes by the use of chronological evidence tents/markers.
- D. All articles of evidence should be carefully marked for identification, on the container in which the evidence is collected, in such a manner that the article is not damaged, and in a way so that the identification is permanent. Identification will consist of the investigator's initials, identification number and evidence item number if applicable.
- E. Each item of evidence will be placed in an appropriate container, such as paper evidence bags, transparent envelopes, plastic vials or strong cardboard boxes. Each evidence container will be properly sealed with the initials and identification number of the person packaging the evidence written across the seal. The outer evidence container for property and evidence submitted by officers will have a label printed from the report management system attached with the following information (See Index Code 1201 for additional information):
  - 1. Case number
  - 2. Primary Reporting Officer and ID#
  - 3. Date of recovery
  - 4. Location where the item was recovered
  - 5. Reason for Police Custody
  - 6. Description of the item recovered
  - 7. Recovering/Submitting Officer and ID#
  - 8. Any additional relevant information may be written on the label or container packaging.

Forensic Services Personnel will follow their Standard Operating Procedures regarding packaging, sealing and labeling property and evidence.
- F. Whenever available, materials and substances will be collected from a known source for submission to the crime lab for comparison with physical evidence collected.

**V. DNA EVIDENCE**

- A. DNA can be found anywhere at a crime scene. The first responding officer should identify possible sources and locations of DNA evidence. Any object or surface that may contain or have been in contact with semen, perspiration, saliva, and other bodily fluids, or skin cells from the victim and/or suspect is of significance to the investigation and should be preserved. Any biological evidence found at a crime scene can be subjected to DNA analysis.
- B. In order to preserve DNA evidence at a crime scene, steps should be taken to avoid contamination of the scene. In an effort to secure a crime scene from contamination, it is necessary to:
  - 1. Restrict entry of the crime scene to essential personnel.
  - 2. Use the established entry and exit point and pathway.
  - 3. Determine the need for personal protective equipment.
  - 4. Establish a secure location for the disposal of biohazardous material like used gloves and disposable instruments.
- C. Biological evidence can be contaminated by an officer's own body fluids. Avoid direct and indirect contact with biological evidence. Anything that is touched with an ungloved hand can leave skin cells behind, which can contaminate DNA evidence. Contamination may extend to the instruments used for collecting evidence. The following steps should be taken to avoid contamination and cross-contamination:

1. Use new gloves for each piece of evidence.
  2. Dispose of single-use disposable tools and equipment between evidence collections.
  3. Minimize contact with the sample (use a swab or disposable forceps, etc.)
  4. If possible, allow evidence to dry before packaging.
  5. Collect and package evidence separately.
  6. Avoid direct contact with the evidence sample.
  7. Use the appropriate personal protective equipment such as gloves, shoe covers, coveralls, and disposable respirators.
  8. Avoid talking, sneezing, and coughing over evidence.
- D. Consider crowds or hostile environments to be potential contaminants to evidence. Environmental factors such as heat, sunlight, bacteria, and mold can destroy DNA evidence. Accordingly, all potential DNA evidence should be identified, preserved, collected, packaged, and transported to an appropriate facility without undue delay.
- E. Under normal circumstances, the collection and packaging of DNA evidence will be carried out by Crime Scene Technicians. However, should exigent conditions exist, an officer may be required to take custody of such evidence. This evidence should then be turned over to the custody of a Crime Scene Technician or transported to the Evidence Collection Unit facility as soon as reasonably possible.

## **VI. INVENTORY AND CHAIN OF CUSTODY OF EVIDENCE**

- A. The chain of custody for physical evidence will commence immediately upon recovery of the evidence. All evidence collected at crime scenes by Crime Scene Technicians will be listed on a chain of custody inventory form. Officers collecting evidence will document chain of custody as described in Index Code 1201. The following information will be recorded for each item of evidence recovered:
1. Description of the item, to include make, model name and/or number, serial number, color, and approximate weight and size.
  2. Source: from whom, or location where, obtained.
  3. Name and identification number of person collecting the item.
- B. Each time transfer of custody of physical evidence takes place, the following information will be recorded on the chain of custody inventory form:
1. Date and time of transfer.
  2. Receiving person's name and functional responsibility.
  3. Reason for the transfer (i.e., lab exam, court, etc.)
  4. Name and location of outside agency or facility receiving evidence, if evidence is delivered to or retained by another laboratory, a court, etc.
- C. The chain of custody inventory form for any evidence submitted to a laboratory for examination will include the following prior custody information:
1. Name of the person last having custody of the item.
  2. Date, time, and method of submission.
  3. Date and time of receipt in the laboratory.
  4. Name and identification number of the person in the laboratory receiving the evidence.

## **VII. PROCESSING OF CERTAIN CRIME SCENES REQUIRED**

- A. The following crimes require processing by a Crime Scene Technician:
1. Homicide, attempt homicide, or suspicious death.
  2. Rape, attempt rape, and sex offenses in the first or second degree.
  3. Assault with intent to murder, rape, or rob.
  4. Assault and battery resulting in life-threatening or incapacitating injury.
  5. Armed robberies (including all bank robberies.)
  6. Burglary.

7. Hit and run motor vehicle accidents resulting in personal injury, death, or extensive property damage.
- B. If a Crime Scene Technician is not available to immediately respond, and the evidence or the crime scene cannot be properly secured, Field Fingerprint Officers should process the following crime scenes, unless scene processing and evidence recovery require advanced techniques beyond basic photography and latent fingerprint recovery:
1. Armed Robbery (excluding bank robberies)
  2. Burglary

If the crime scene of any of the crimes listed above is not processed by a Crime Scene Technician, the investigating officer will state the reasons why in the Offense/Incident report.

- C. Exigent conditions, such as the need for multiple Crime Scene Technicians to process a major crime scene, may require the Evidence Collection Unit to enter a “Restricted Response Mode.” In this mode, requests for the Evidence Collection Unit will be prioritized in consultation with the Evidence Collection & Identification Section Program Manager. Certain incidents normally processed by the Evidence Collection Unit will be processed by the investigating officer or a Field Fingerprint Officer.

In prioritizing calls for service, the following factors will be considered: Nature of the incident; Location of scene; Fragility of evidence; Weather conditions; Time of day; Technical expertise required to collect the evidence; Estimated arrival time of a crime scene technician; and availability of crime scene technicians to be called-in.

#### **VIII. CRIME SCENES NOT ROUTINELY PROCESSED BY THE EVIDENCE COLLECTION UNIT**

The following incidents will not be routinely processed by a Crime Scene Technician:

- Recovered stolen motor vehicles
- Thefts, including thefts and attempted thefts from motor vehicles
- Shed Burglaries
- Miscellaneous misdemeanors

The above-mentioned incidents should, however be processed by a field fingerprint technician. Processing by a Crime Scene Technician of the above-mentioned crime scenes is justified if any of the following circumstances are present:

- A. Suspects have been identified.
- B. The crime scene is a vehicle that was used in the commission of a felony or crime of violence.
- C. The crime under investigation is believed to be part of a significant pattern of ongoing criminal activity in a specific area.
- D. The field supervisor in charge of the investigation has determined that viable physical evidence exists at the scene, and the collection of which is beyond the capabilities of a Field Fingerprint Officer and requires the expertise of a crime scene technician.

#### **IX. PROCESSING SEARCH AND SEIZURE WARRANT SCENES**

A Crime Scene Technician will process the scene of a search and seizure warrant if any of the following conditions are present:

- A. The item(s) to be seized are believed to be connected to a crime scene previously processed by a Crime Scene Technician.
- B. The item(s) to be seized may potentially be submitted to a criminalistics laboratory for examination.
- C. Special photographic techniques are required. (Routine photographing of the scene will be done by field operations personnel or CID.)

**X. PROTECTING/SECURING THE CRIME SCENE**

- A. Prior to the arrival of the Crime Scene Technician or Field Fingerprint Officer, nothing at the crime scene should be touched or moved except as is required to save life or to deal with a medical or similar emergency. The first officer at the scene is responsible for protecting (securing) the crime scene.
- B. Only persons who have a legitimate investigative or supervisory role will be permitted into a crime scene. The officer in charge of securing the crime scene will prepare a contamination sheet listing the name, rank and identification number (if any), and time of entry and exit of all persons who enter the crime scene.
- C. Too many persons at a crime scene can lead to the destruction or removal of potential evidence. The senior ranking officer at the crime scene will ensure that the crime scene is protected and controlled.

**XI. EVIDENCE MARKERS**

- A. Patrol officers will maintain evidence marker kits containing fluorescent vinyl markers and have them available for use at crime scenes.
- B. Individual evidence markers will be placed adjacent to items of physical evidence that have been noted during the initial interaction with the crime scene by first responding officers, when:
  - 1. It is necessary to prevent the movement or inadvertent destruction of an item of evidence by other first responders; or
  - 2. The item of physical evidence is small or is in a location that may make it difficult to find again if it is not marked.
- C. The evidence markers may be retrieved when a Crime Scene Technician has replaced the marker with an alphanumeric evidence placard.
- D. Evidence markers can be cleaned with hot water and soap. Markers that have been contaminated with biohazardous materials shall be disposed of as outlined under Index Code 703, Section VI.D.
- E. Replacement markers may be obtained through the Quartermaster or from the Evidence Collection and Identification Section facility.

**XII. CRIME SCENE SEARCH & PRELIMINARY SURVEY**

- A. A crime scene search is a planned search for the purpose of locating physical evidence of the crime under investigation. An effective crime scene search should include the procedures outlined in this section. However, it is recognized that every crime scene is unique and may require a somewhat different approach.
- B. A preliminary survey of the crime scene will be conducted by the investigating officer or, if available, the Crime Scene Technician. This constitutes the planning stage of the search and will include:
  - 1. Developing the objectives of the search - what is to be found.
  - 2. Taking special note of evidence, which may easily be destroyed such as shoe prints in dust, footprints, and fingerprints.
  - 3. Organizing the search.
    - a. Make assignments for photographs, fingerprints, plaster casts and evidence handling.
    - b. Decide on search pattern to be employed - lane, grid, spiral or zone searches.
    - c. Issue instructions to assisting personnel based on assignment and chronology of processing.

**XIII. REPORT OF THE CRIME SCENE PROCESSOR**

- A. The crime scene processor will prepare a report of the events that transpired at the crime scene, based on his/her original notes and observations. The narrative is used during any prolonged investigation and at trial to recall details of the crime scene.

- B. The narrative will include the following information:
1. Date, time and location of the scene.
  2. Weather and lighting conditions.
  3. Identity of other individuals present at the scene.
  4. Assignments given to personnel at the crime scene.
  5. Condition and position of the evidence, which was found at the crime scene.
  6. Names of victims and suspects, if known.
  7. Report number.
  8. Action taken by crime scene processor, including type of photographs taken, measurements taken (yes or no) and a listing of physical evidence recovered.
- C. Whenever a crime scene is processed by a Crime Scene Technician, a "Crime Scene Unit - Supplemental Report" will be filled out by the processor with the appropriate information included. When a scene is processed by a Field Fingerprint Officer, the officer will complete a supplement report in the records management system, if they are not the investigating officer, documenting the appropriate information.

#### **XIV. CRIME SCENE SKETCH**

- A. A crime scene sketch is a handmade pictorial representation of conditions at a crime scene. It is used in clarifying investigative data and in making the situation more easily understood by eliminating unnecessary details. The sketch will be used in conjunction with, and not in place of, photographs of the crime scene.
- B. The crime scene sketch will include:
1. Dimensions of the crime scene and its relevant contents.
  2. Relation of the crime scene to other buildings, geographical features, roads, etc.
  3. Distances between objects, and from objects to entrances/exits.
  4. Measurements showing the exact location of items of evidence including the victim. Each object should also be identified by indicating its distance from two fixed points such as doors, windows, walls, etc.
  5. Address, floor, or room number, as appropriate.
  6. Direction of north.
  7. Names of the persons preparing the sketch; date, time, report number, type of case, and victim.

#### **XV. RECOVERED PROPERTY AT CRIME SCENES**

Crime Scene Technicians will not take possession of recovered property unless it is necessary to transport such items for laboratory examination purposes.

- A. If the investigating officer was the individual who collected the evidence from the crime scene then he/she is responsible for redeeming the evidence from the property storage facility for court.
- B. If a Crime Scene Technician has collected the evidence from the crime scene, and if no investigating officer is involved in the chain of custody, then the Crime Scene Technician will redeem the evidence for court.
- C. In addition to these procedures, guidelines for obtaining and returning evidence for court will be followed as outlined in directive 1201.1.

#### **XVI. CONTAMINATED PROPERTY**

- A. When handling items that may be contaminated, employees will wear disposable gloves.
- B. Contaminated property will be placed in a plastic envelope and sealed with evidence tape. Plastic envelopes containing contaminated property will not be stapled. The envelope will be clearly marked "Contains Possible Contaminated Items" or a biohazard label will be affixed. The Bio-Hazard "Yes/No" question in the record management system Property Card/Property Side Panel will be marked, "Yes."
- C. Sharp items should be presumed infective and handled with caution, and will be placed in puncture-proof containers.

- D. The Property Management Warehouse Manager will supervise the disposal of contaminated or possibly contaminated property at the Headquarters facility.

**XVII. COOPERATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES**

*Anne Arundel County Police has agreed to assist Annapolis City Police with crime scene processing. Annapolis City Police may request the services of the Anne Arundel County Police Evidence Collection Unit in accordance with agreed upon procedures. Anne Arundel County Police Evidence Collection Unit personnel, consistent with unit SOPs, have discretion to accept or reject requests from Annapolis City Police for crime scene processing services. In circumstances where Evidence Collection Unit personnel respond to assist Annapolis City Police, the Evidence Collection Tech must contact the Communications Section to generate an "Assist Other Agency" call in the computer aided dispatch system.*

**XVIII. PROPONENT UNIT:** Evidence Collection & Identification *Section*.

**XIV. CANCELLATION:** This directive cancels Index Code 1203, dated *11-15-21*.