

## COLLECTION AND PRESERVATION OF EVIDENCE

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### CRIME SCENE PRESERVATION

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**Purpose:** To establish procedures for the North Little Rock Police Department to follow for the preservation, recognition, documentation, and recovery of physical evidence at crime scenes.

**Policy Statement:** It is the policy of the North Little Rock Police Department to ensure that officers responding to any crime scene will be responsible for the preservation of the scene. The preservation of the crime scene is paramount because it is the initial step of the evidentiary process that begins at the scene and ends in the courtroom.

#### Summary of Changes:

#### Definitions:

**Forensic Science** is the use of science to prove or disprove evidence in a court of law.

**Evidence** is testimony, writings, or material objects offered in proof of an alleged fact or proposition.

#### PROCEDURE

##### 1 Securing the Crime Scene

- 1.1 When a crime has been committed and a crime scene is established, the crime scene and its perimeter must be secured. All personnel who enter the crime scene must be listed on the *Crime Scene Entry Log*.
- 1.1.1 The *Crime Scene Entry Log* will show who was in the crime scene before it was secured, when the initial officer arrived, and who entered the crime scene after it was secured.
- 1.1.2 The officer must document the following information:
  - 1.1.2.1 Names and telephone numbers of police personnel;
  - 1.1.2.2 Agency names and telephone numbers of others, such as: MEMS or NLRFD Rescue;
  - 1.1.2.3 Reason the person was in the crime scene;
  - 1.1.2.4 The time of arrival of all personnel; and
  - 1.1.2.5 The time of departure of all personnel.
- 1.2 Once emergency medical personnel have either removed the victim from the scene, or the victim has been determined to be deceased, all unnecessary personnel must be removed from the crime scene.
- 1.2.1 Unnecessary personnel would be described as anyone who is not at the scene for securing and protecting it, or investigating the incident.

##### 2 Crime Scene Guidelines

- 2.1 The initial responding officer should be aware of his/her approach to the crime scene. The officer should determine that there is only one way in and out of the crime scene, and that this access should be controlled by the officer until he/she is properly relieved by a supervisor.
- 2.2 The officer's first priority upon arrival at the scene should be to check for injured persons and call for medical assistance, if needed.
- 2.3 Next, the officer should start the *Crime Scene Entry Log* and keep it updated.
- 2.4 Notification to an immediate supervisor.
- 2.5 Attempt to locate and identify any witnesses or suspects.
- 2.6 The patrol supervisor at the scene will notify the Detective Office in accordance with Policy Directive 30-01.

##### 3 Locating and Identifying Witnesses

- 3.1 Officers will attempt to locate any possible witnesses to the incident. When an officer makes contact with any witnesses, the officer will do the following:
  - 3.1.1 Obtain personal identification so that person can be properly identified at the time of the incident and/or located at a later time.
  - 3.1.2 Separate the witnesses until their statements can be taken.
  - 3.1.3 If it is not possible to separate the witnesses, the officer will advise them not to discuss the case until their statements can be taken.

#### 4 Documentation of the Crime Scene

- 4.1 The initial responding officer will complete an *Incident Report*. Any other officer or supervisor who enters the crime scene will write a *Supplemental Report* stating the following:
  - 4.1.1 The purpose of their presence in the crime scene;
  - 4.1.2 What they observed at the crime scene; and
  - 4.1.3 What they did at the crime scene such as touching or moving any items.
- 4.2 The *Incident Report* will indicate that the investigation was turned over to the investigator, noting the investigator's rank, first initial and last name.
- 4.3 The *Crime Scene Entry Log* will be considered as a *Supplemental Report*.
- 4.4 The ranking patrol supervisor will ensure that enough patrol officers are placed at the investigator's disposal to protect the crime scene until they are no longer needed, and are released by the detective supervisor in charge of the crime scene.

#### 5 The Preliminary Survey of the Crime Scene

- 5.1 The preliminary survey is the survey conducted by the detective supervisor who is responsible for the overall management of the crime scene. The crime scene supervisor will attempt to do the following:
  - 5.1.1 Determine the scope of the crime scene;
  - 5.1.2 Determine the minimum number of personnel needed to process the crime scene;
  - 5.1.3 Determine the equipment needed for processing the crime scene; and
  - 5.1.4 Assign personnel to the following tasks:
    - 5.1.4.1 Crime scene search to include the identification, documentation, and the collection of physical evidence;
    - 5.1.4.2 Photographs of the crime scene and a photograph log;
    - 5.1.4.3 Narrative description;
    - 5.1.4.4 Crime scene sketch and diagram;
    - 5.1.4.5 Latent print recovery and latent print lift log;
    - 5.1.4.6 Conduct the final survey, or the final walk through and
    - 5.1.4.7 Release the crime scene.

#### 6 Crime Scene to the Courtroom

- 6.1 The purpose of the application of forensic science at a crime scene is to:
  - 6.1.1 **Reconstruct** the crime scene in order for the truth to ultimately be told in a courtroom about what type of criminal offense took place at the crime scene.
    - 6.1.1.1 The crime scene is where the identification, documentation, recovery and the processing of physical evidence begins.
    - 6.1.1.2 The courtroom is the place where the physical evidence will end up for trial. It is where the evidence is examined, as well as scrutinized by attorneys, judges, and others.
    - 6.1.1.3 In the end the evidence eventually will be allowed to speak for itself. This is when it is presented to a judge or jury in a court of law.
  - 6.1.2 The **chain of custody** of evidence from the crime scene to the courtroom is essential with any criminal case. The chain of custody must be documented in order to ensure the evidence has been accounted for at all times.
  - 6.1.3 It is important for supervisors to ensure police personnel perform the same function to the same quality level at any crime scene.
    - 6.1.3.1 This standard begins with the effective recognition, collection, and documentation of any physical evidence recovered from the crime scene.
    - 6.1.3.2 It ends in the courtroom where the physical or real evidence will tell the true story about what happened at the crime scene.