



FORENSIC SCIENCE ACADEMY

CRIME SCENE PROCESSING GUIDE

1. PRESERVATION:

A. Scene:

This is one of the most important parts of an investigation and often inadequately handled by first responders. When you arrive at the scene several police officers and firefighters have come and gone. Never assume that the crime scene before you has not been altered in some way.

1. Park your vehicle well outside of the scene perimeter. Once you have confirmed the perimeter is sufficient and/or have progressed in the investigation, you can move your vehicle closer or to a better location.
2. Make contact with the officer handling the investigation and obtain all pertinent information regarding the scene. Be sure to ask if anything has been moved, removed or otherwise altered.
3. Determine if the perimeter is sufficient in size or if it needs to be increased. The perimeter can be decreased as the investigation progresses however *never decrease the perimeter at this stage of the investigation.*
4. Have all unnecessary personnel leave the scene.
5. Identify hazardous conditions that exist within the scene, i.e. curbs, holes, hanging wires, etc. and take steps to eliminate or avoid them for your safety.

B. Evidence:

Certain weather conditions can alter or destroy evidence. Preservation of the evidence is paramount.

1. If the evidence is secure (weather is not a threat) begin the next step.
2. In the case of inclement weather only the evidence that would be adversely affected should be collected immediately. Always place an evidence placard next to the item prior to collecting it to mark its position. If the weather permits, photograph the evidence prior to collecting it.

2. DOCUMENTATION/NOTE TAKING:

Your notes record the scene as you find it. They must be legible and structured, as they will become an important part of the overall case and subject to subpoena by a defense attorney. You can use a cassette recorder to dictate your notes, however you will have to translate them to paper later and the tape may have to be booked as evidence depending on your department's procedures.

A. Your notes should include the following items:

1. Arrival time, officer in charge, personnel present, weather conditions.
2. Information obtained in your initial briefing.
3. Statements. Obtain any witness and suspect statements, as you will use this information when processing the scene.
4. Your observations. Note the following conditions.
 - a. Indoor scenes. The position of doors and windows and if they were shut, were they locked, was the location ransack, were any lights left on, if the scene is restricted to one room or several, etc.
 - b. Outdoor scenes. Note the lighting conditions, traffic control devices, road conditions, vehicles in the scene, etc.
 - c. If paramedics were called to the scene rest assured you will find medical trash they have left behind. Leave it alone and include that in your notes and photographs.

5. Your assignment/responsibilities. For example, some scenes may not require processing for latent prints. Make note of that and who made that decision.
6. Processing. Include start and finish times for any work performed, i.e. photography, processing, collection, and measurements.

3. EVIDENCE IDENTIFICATION:

Once you have adequate notes of the scene and your actions so far, you need to start identifying and marking evidence with numbered placards.

- A. Request the officer in charge of the scene to walk through the scene with you and identify what they feel is evidence. Performing this function will ensure that all evidence is identified and any questions you may have regarding potential evidence are answered.

Remember that evidence can be anything. Items that appear to be out of place or do not belong at the location should be considered as potential evidence.

1. Take numbered evidence placards with you and place them next to each item. Try to keep the numbers in sequence. You can start numbering at the first item of evidence you locate or start numbering where the crime started and follow the course of the scene. Place all the placards in a uniform manner. Make sure they face the same way and are as close to the evidence as possible.
 2. Walk through the scene again to obtain notes on the evidence. Include a basic description of the evidence and the placard number. Also include where it is located, i.e. bedroom, kitchen, etc. More detailed descriptions of the evidence can be obtained in your lab under a controlled environment.
- B. With indoor scenes check the following:
 1. Check any doors and window for pry marks, other damage, or blood.
 2. Check sinks, bathtubs, showers, washers, and dryers for signs of recent use or blood.
 3. Check trashcans for discarded evidence.

4. Check the ceilings, walls and floors for blood or other evidence. Crime scenes are three-dimensional.
5. *Imagine you are the suspect - where would you walk during the course of the crime, what you would do, and what would you touch*

C. With outdoor scenes check the following:

1. Check in bushes, shrubs, trees for discarded weapons or other evidence.
2. Check trashcans and dumpsters for discarded weapons and evidence.
3. Check for evidence left on or thrown on roof tops.
4. Look for evidence under vehicles or hidden in the wheel wells or undercarriage.