

<b>PALM BEACH GARDENS POLICE DEPARTMENT</b>		
<b>RESPONSIBILITIES OF CRIME SCENE PROCESSORS</b>		
<b>POLICY AND PROCEDURE 4.3.9.2</b>		
<b>Effective Date :</b> 11/03/11	<b>Accreditation Standards:</b> CALEA 83.1.1 – 83.2.4 CFA	<b>Review Date:</b> 07/01/2013

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**PURPOSE:** To provide for the responsibility of a person or persons to process the scene of an incident, and to require that a crime scene/accident processor is available on a 24-hour basis.

**SCOPE:** This policy and procedure applies to all members.

**REVIEW RESPONSIBILITY:** Investigations Bureau Major

**POLICY:** Processing the crime scene is one of the most crucial functions of the crime scene investigation unit. Properly processed crime scenes serve the investigation by providing valuable clues as to the occurrence of the crime and the identity of those involved. Evidence overlooked becomes lost and is of no value to the investigation. Therefore, it is imperative that the value of proper crime scene investigation is understood. This operating procedure is intended to guide procedures for a successful investigation and prosecution.

### **1. PROCEDURE**

- a. The investigations division shall provide the city with adequate crime scene investigation coverage on a 24-hour basis.
- b. When an occasion arises that no crime scene person is on duty on a given shift, the Investigations Bureau Major or designee will ensure the availability of an on call crime scene person.
- c. When the immediate services of a crime scene specialist are required the crime scene investigators shall be notified within one hour of the need.
- d. On call personnel shall be equipped with mobile radios to facilitate notification by the Communications center.

### **2. PROTECTION OF CRIME SCENE**

- a. Responsibility for protection of crime scene
  - i. The first officer arriving to the scene of a crime shall take immediate steps to protect and preserve the scene from contamination. The officer shall request the necessary assistance to accomplish this requirement.

- ii. The officer shall immediately notify his/her supervisor for assistance and guidance in the event the crime is a serious felony, i.e., rape, homicide, armed robbery, arson, or other serious felony.
- iii. The first officer at the scene shall cordon off, or cause to be cordoned off, the entire scene and related areas to prevent unauthorized intrusion. (Department-issued crime scene tape will be used for this purpose if available).
- iv. It shall be the joint responsibility of the Sergeant and officer to notify the criminal investigations division if circumstances warrant.
- v. Prior to the arrival of any detectives, the assigned officer shall make notes and document important factors related to the scene:
  - 1. Time of arrival.
  - 2. Weather and lighting conditions.
  - 3. Persons entering the crime scene perimeter.
- vi. Normally, patrol persons and supervisors are not responsible for the collection of evidence unless unusual circumstances exist that require the immediate seizure of evidence. These circumstances will usually be dictated by the location of the crime and the number of bystanders.
- b. The assigned lead detective, upon arriving at the scene shall assume responsibility for the scene and the conduct and activities of all support personnel.
  - i. The lead detective shall document, or cause to be documented all persons entering the crime scene.
  - ii. The lead detective shall have the scene photographed, sketched and diagrammed by the qualified crime scene investigator in all cases of first-degree capital felonies or other serious crimes.
  - iii. The lead detective will coordinate/supervise locating and interviewing witnesses.
- c. The crime scene investigator shall be responsible for the collection and preservation of physical evidence at the direction of the lead detective.

### **3. COLLECTION/PROCESSING/PRESERVING OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

- a. Crime scene investigators will endeavor to collect and package evidentiary material so that the material's original condition is maintained. Every effort will be made to collect and package as complete a sampling of evidentiary material as practical and possible.
- b. Collection of Comparison Samples:
  - i. The collection of physical evidence shall include collection of comparison samples and substances from a known source whenever possible. Comparison samples are of particular importance when body fluids, hair, fiber, latent print, and material(s) transfer evidence are collected. The location of comparison samples, in relation to corresponding physical evidence, will be recorded.
- c. Latent fingerprint processing
  - i. Latent fingerprint processing is conducted only by specially-trained crime scene personnel in all crimes classified as first-degree capital felonies and other serious felonies.
  - ii. Crime scene technician shall not be used to process attempted burglaries to automobiles, residences or businesses, or other such minor processing where no arrests are likely or no arrests exist, unless there are exigent circumstances as determined by a road supervisor or detective.
  - iii. Patrol officers, patrol sergeants, and other non-specialized personnel of adequate training are authorized to conduct fingerprint processing in less serious investigations such as:
    - 1. Attempted burglaries to autos, residences and businesses, minor burglaries to autos, residences and businesses, and recovered and stolen vehicles.
    - 2. Minor theft investigation.
    - 3. Other investigations as deemed appropriate by the supervisor in charge.
  - iv. Latent fingerprints should be developed and removed (lifted) from the surface(s) of items with department approved equipment, i.e., dusting powders, brushes, fingerprint tape, fingerprint cards, etc.

- v. No attempt should be made to brush or apply powder to prints in dust, obviously greasy prints, or bloody prints, as this will almost surely destroy them. Such prints should be photographed.
  - vi. Wet objects to be processed for fingerprints should be allowed to air dry before processing, i.e., beer cans, glass and automobiles wet with rain or condensation. Lamps or other artificial heating should not be used.
  - vii. Items believed to contain a latent, such as paper, cardboard, unpainted wood, or other absorbent surfaces should be carefully handled and transported to the crime scene lab for chemical processing.
  - viii. Whenever latent prints are removed from an item and placed on a fingerprint card, the fingerprint card should contain the following information (labeling) officer/technician's name and ill number, date, case number, brief diagram or explanation of source of print and direction of print in relation to surface.
- d. Body fluids and blood:
- i. Blood-stained clothing should be folded in such a manner that stains are not transferred to other areas of the garment. A clean piece of non-printed paper should be placed between layers of clothing in order to prevent cross-contamination.
  - ii. A clean razor blade should be used to remove dried crusts of blood from an object. New razor blades or scraping implements should be used when the source of the bloodstain is believed to have changed. Razor blades or scraping implements used in the collection of bloodstains should be packaged with its respective blood sample.
  - iii. Small dry stains which cannot be scraped off may be removed by wiping the surface with a piece of sterile gauze or clean filter paper moistened with distilled water. The gauze or filter paper should then be placed in a sterile tube and forwarded for analysis as soon as possible. Whenever possible, a sample of the unstained surface material near the recovered bloodstain should be removed and packaged separately and submitted for analysis with its companion sample.
  - iv. Moist blood samples may be collected with an eye dropper and placed in a glass tube. Trace quantities of moist blood which cannot otherwise be collected should be left to dry, then scraped from the surface.
  - v. Blood in dirt or sand:
    - 1. If blood is encrusted on the surface, the crust should be removed and enclosed in separate pill boxes (depending on the size) to avoid additional contamination with dirt and sand during transport or shipment to the crime lab. The rest of the specimen may be collected and submitted in circular ice cream type or other suitable container.
  - vi. Where blood has been submitted to a Laboratory for examination, victim and suspect blood samples (if possible) should be included. Blood samples obtained at the scene of a negligent homicide/serious injury auto accident will be collected in a gray-topped vacuum tube for submission to the toxicology lab and medical examiner's office. Blood samples obtained for hospital use may be collected in a red or purple-topped tube.
  - vii. Seminal stains should be treated much like blood samples. Clothing, bed linens, etc., should be folded, layered with paper and/or packed separately in order to prevent cross-contamination. Added precautions should be taken where stains have dried and are subject to cracking and dislodging if disturbed by folding or packaging. Linens should be marked to show the position they were found (head, foot side up, etc.).
- e. Trace evidence:
- i. Trace evidence is material which, because of its minute size, is easily exchanged through contact or transferred by air current. The clothing of suspects and/or victims is prime accumulators of trace evidence and should be collected as soon as possible. When collecting clothing from a person, that person should first stand on a clean piece of non-printed paper. As each item is removed it should be carefully folded and packaged separately. The paper should then be folded and submitted for analysis with the collected items.

1. Every effort should be made to keep suspect and victim clothing samples separate from each other in order to prevent cross-contamination.
2. Threads, fibers and hairs should be handled with tweezers or forceps. As in the case of most kinds of evidence, control samples should be collected and submitted for comparison. When hair samples are collected from a live victim or suspect, they should be taken from different areas of the body including the crown, temple, beard, arm, pubic, and leg area(s). Hairs, threads, and fibers should be packaged in clean, dry containers such as envelopes, pill boxes, etc. A new comb or clean tweezers/scissors should be used to further prevent contamination of samples during the collection process.

f. Firearms:

- i. Before handling a firearm, the following should be noted: position of the hammer, position of slide mechanism (automatic), and position of safety. If the handling is required to determine the firearm's condition, it should be picked up by the edge of the trigger guard or textured finish of the handle which would not ordinarily retain an identifiable print. The make, model serial number, caliber, and other descriptive information should be recorded.
- ii. All firearms will be unloaded before packaging unless otherwise directed by the receiving crime Laboratory. When unloading a firearm, the following should be noted: condition of ammunition beneath the firing pin; position of fired/unfired ammunition; number of rounds left in the magazine, and whether or not a round is in the chamber.
- iii. Damaged or rusty weapons should be handled with extreme caution. If a gun cannot be checked or unloaded, it should be hand delivered to the crime laboratory in an evidence container clearly marked "caution-loaded firearm". No attempt should be made in the field to clean or dry a firearm taken into evidence.
- iv. It is recommended that fingerprint equipment, i.e., dusting powder and tape, be used to lift the serial number from a weapon in order to eliminate the possibility of error if the number was only hand recorded.
- v. An evidentiary firearm should not be cleaned. Blood and other substances adhering to the gun should be left intact for Laboratory examination.
- vi. Firearms retained for evidentiary purposes should be marked with the investigator's initials in an inconspicuous location. Such markings should not detract from the cosmetic appearance nor cause an appreciable reduction in the value of the firearm.

#### **4. CRIME SCENE SKETCHES**

- a. Crime scene sketches which must be made pursuant to the collection and preservation of physical evidence should, at a minimum, include the following elements:
  - i. Basic dimensions;
  - ii. Relation of the crime scene to established points of reference;
  - iii. Address;
  - iv. Location of significant crime scene features;
  - v. Date and time of preparation;
  - vi. Name(s) of person(s) drawing sketch;
  - vii. Compass direction(s);
  - viii. Location of items of physical evidence recovered; and
  - ix. Scale reference, inapplicable.

#### **5. CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY**

- a. The process of evidence collection shall be supported by crime scene photography and/or videotaping whenever possible. Crime scene photographs shall represent a field of vision and perspective as close to

actual scale as possible. Should unusual camera positions, lighting conditions, and camera settings be required, they should be noted by the crime scene photographer as each photograph is taken.

- b. A scale should be used and included in the field of view when the objects photographed cannot be physically removed or will dissipate over-time (i.e., tool marks, blood splatter, fluorescent luminal, etc.) or when size is a crucial factor. A photographic record log should be kept on major crime scenes (i.e., murder, rape, etc.) or when appropriately necessary as to technical photographic conditions. Where the courts demand that nothing be introduced into the field of view, a separate photograph can be taken, using the same camera position, lighting and camera settings.
- c. Officers/detectives/crime scene investigators assigned to process the scene of a serious crime against persons or property will endeavor to photograph and/or collect all available physical evidence. If photographs are not taken or physical evidence is not recovered, the investigator will prepare a report stating the reasons why.
- d. Photographs of crime scenes, accidents, vandalism/graffiti or any calls for photographs only, where other processing is required, should be directed to a road supervisor.
- e. Assault victims, injuries and like occurrences, where no arrests are likely and no arrests exists, or their injuries have been covered with bandages, and lacking any other extenuating circumstances, do not require photographs.

## **6. DISPOSITION OF EVIDENCE**

- a. The lead case detective and crime scene supervisor will make the determination for the need of any item of evidence to be submitted to an outside forensic laboratory for analysis.
- b. The lead case detective will be responsible for ensuring that evidence is submitted to the laboratory in a timely manner.
- c. The assigned crime scene investigator shall be responsible for the packaging, proper labeling, and related documentation for mailing or hand delivering the evidence to the laboratory. If mailed, evidence should be forwarded by registered mail.
- d. Investigations that do not involve the crime scene investigations unit, the investigating detective/officer shall be responsible for forwarding evidence to the laboratory, (i.e., question document examination, vice and narcotics, non-fatal, vehicle accidents).

## **7. SUBMISSION OF EVIDENCE TO LABORATORY**

- a. Procedures:
  - i. Once collected; perishable evidence such as dried blood, blood-stained objects, other physiological stains and tissue, and biological material should be placed in frozen evidence storage pending referral to the crime lab. Whole blood (liquid) samples should not be frozen but kept refrigerated.
  - ii. Evidence held in storage pending collection of comparison samples will be checked weekly to determine if the comparison sample has been obtained. If so, a referral from storage to the laboratory of the appropriate agency should be made. The officer submitting the item into storage or assigned case follow-up will maintain a record which accounts for the continued disposition of the item.
- b. Blood-Stained Evidence:
  - i. Such items will be air dried before wrapping. Do not expose to direct sunlight or heat.
  - ii. Each item will be wrapped separately to avoid cross contamination, preferably with plastic evidence bags marked with bio-hazard labels.
  - iii. Fabric may be marked in ink with the investigator's identifying mark away from the stained areas and placed in plastic evidence bags with proper evidence labels i.e., tags, evidence labels, etc.
- c. Blood-Stained Non-Absorbent Evidence:

- i. If possible, the entire stained section of the item itself should be submitted. In lieu of the stained item, scrapings will be acceptable. See collection and preservation of evidence for procedures on scraping stains, section VI, and paragraph 8 (b) (d).
  - ii. Preferably, scrapings should be contained in a pill box or vial for shipment. As an alternative, an envelope with a druggist folds and sealed with cellophane tape is acceptable.
  - iii. The container should be appropriately marked for identification or the item itself marked.
- d. Liquid Blood Samples:
- i. Samples from victim(s) and suspect(s) should be submitted, if possible.
  - ii. An appropriate amount should be submitted, at least five cubic centimeters in a properly marked sterile container.
  - iii. No refrigerants and/or dry ice should be added to the sample.
  - iv. Stopper on vial should be sealed with tape to avoid loosening due to air pressure differences in place and possible loss of blood.
  - v. Sample should be kept refrigerated but not frozen.
  - vi. Sample should be shipped registered airmail special delivery and marked "keep refrigerated".
- e. Semen, saliva stains, urine and other body fluids:
- i. Fluids should be handled in the same manner as blood stains and liquid blood.
- f. Firearms and Ammunition:
- i. Firearms at the point of initial discovery should be handled as described under section 6, paragraph B of this directive.
  - ii. Live ammunition cannot be sent through the U.S. Mail but can be shipped via other carriers such as UPS or Federal Express.
  - iii. Bullet (projectile) and/or gun can be shipped registered mail, U.S. Postal Service.
  - iv. Projectile should be marked for identification on the nose or base. Concern should be given to foreign materials or impressions on the nose, if these could be important to the investigation. Marking of the projectile itself can be completely omitted if there is concern for possible destruction of evidence. Place the projectile in a suitable pill box, seal, and mark the seal container.
  - v. Cartridge cases and shot shell casing: mark inside the mouth or side of case near mouth.
  - vi. Firearms should be marked for identification in an inconspicuous place, such as within the trigger guard. Also string-tag the gun. Tag should list the caliber, make, model, serial number and case numbers.
  - vii. Firearms, live ammunition, and projectiles should be shipped in cardboard boxes of suitable strength per the shipping agency's requirements.
  - viii. Department of transportation regulations should be consulted and compiled with as to the packaging and labeling olive ammunition.
- g. All items submitted for examination with concern for particular types of examinations (latent fingerprint, blood or body fluid residue) should be packaged and stabilized in such a manner that movement is restricted to eliminate the possibility of destroying evidence while in transport.
- h. Submission of evidence to the FBI laboratories:
- i. Requires a transmittal letter providing the following information: brief background of the investigation, suspect information, whether any previous tests or examinations have been performed on the item in question, and the type of test(s) to be performed.
    - 1. Evidence submitted to other agencies should be in conformance with the agency's particular requirements.

## 8. CRIME SCENE EQUIPMENT

- a. Equipment used to process crime scenes shall be divided into two categories: that which is directly issued to investigators and that which is maintained in the crime scene office as general use items.

- b. Crime scene investigators have at their ready disposal, two (2) vehicles for a timely response to crime scenes upon request. The vehicles are equipped with the following items and equipment for processing crime scenes.
  - i. Assorted size bags (paper and plastic), cardboard boxes for evidence collection.
  - ii. Steel measuring tape.
  - iii. Walk-A-Roller measuring device for measuring long distances.
  - iv. Shovel and machete.
  - v. Hand cleaning solvent.
- c. For crime scene conditions and circumstances that may require the use of special equipment such as a portable generator, lighting and ladder, the Palm Beach Gardens Fire Department may assist.
- d. Crime scene investigators, individually, shall be issued the following supplies and equipment:
  - i. Latent fingerprinting processing kit containing:
    - 1. Standard carbon-based fingerprint powders of various colors for specific surfaces.
    - 2. Magnetic powders for certain surfaces.
    - 3. Camel hair brushes, magnetic wands carbosmoove brushes and fiberglass brushes for use at the investigator's discretion.
    - 4. Latent fingerprint cards, white in color, (4" x 5" and manila pre-printed latent print preservation envelopes.
- e. Photography:
  - i. Each crime scene investigator, individually, shall be issued a 35 mm camera, wide angle lens, close-up attachment and flash/strobe unit, and film to photographically record and preserve crime scenes and evidence.
  - ii. Crime scene investigators have at their disposal, for special use situations, a video camcorder and metal detector.
  - iii. Additionally, each road patrol supervisor's vehicle is equipped with a 35 mm camera for photographing minor investigations.
- f. Crime scene sketching:
  - i. Each crime scene investigator shall be issued the following materials to accomplish crime scene diagramming:
    - 1. Note pad and pencils.
    - 2. Graph paper.
    - 3. Measuring instruments.
  - ii. Crime scene templates and general architectural drafting templates shall be available in the crime scene office for scaled preparation of diagrams for formal court presentations.
- g. Collection of evidence:
  - i. Each crime scene investigator shall be supplied with or have available, the following items for collection and preservation of evidence:
    - 1. Gripping devices, tweezers, forceps or other instruments necessary to pick up or handle evidence to prevent contamination.
    - 2. Scraping instruments for trace evidence collection.
    - 3. Paper bags, plastic bags, vials, plastic boxes, cardboard boxes as mandated by the department's evidence collection and storage procedures.
    - 4. String tags and metal engraving device for identifying and marking evidence.
- h. Accident investigation:
  - i. Each accident investigator shall be equipped with necessary equipment to allow effectiveness and efficient evidence collection:
    - 1. Rolatape.
    - 2. Polaroid and 35mm camera.

3. Additional measuring tapes and devices as necessary.

## 9. GLOSSARY

**Crime Scene** -The location or indication of where the crime occurred. It covers the area where the crime was committed and any portion of the surrounding area over, or through which the suspect or victim passed enroute to, or going away from the scene of the crime.

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#### APPROVED:



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