

**NEW CANAAN POLICE DEPARTMENT**

**SUBJECT: COLLECTION AND PRESERVATION OF EVIDENCE**

**GENERAL ORDER NUMBER: 89-11-64**  
**FILE: SRVS 4-4**  
**AUXILIARY & TECHNICAL**

**I PURPOSE/POLICY**

Proper documentation, collection, preservation, and submission to the forensic/toxicology laboratories of physical evidence may provide the key ingredient of any police investigation. The officer/investigator processing crime incident scenes should be properly equipped and trained to collect, identify, and package the evidence so that it will not be changed in form and value when it reaches the laboratory. It will be the responsibility of the officer collecting the evidence to maintain a chain of custody of that evidence in order to ensure that it is presented to the courts in a professional manner and in compliance with all legal requirements.

The purpose of this general order is to establish responsibilities for the officer/investigator processing of crime scenes and to establish guidelines for the proper documentation, collection, preservation, and submission to the forensic/toxicology laboratory of physical evidence.

**II RESPONSIBILITY**

It is the responsibility of all departmental personnel to adhere to this general order. It is the additional responsibility of the supervisory and command staff to ensure compliance.

**III PROCEDURES (PROCESSING EVIDENCE AT THE SCENE)**

**A** The following procedures should be followed by the first officer(s) at a crime scene;

- 1.** Do not rush into the crime scene; a dangerous suspect may still be present. Rushing into the scene may also result in the accidental destruction or contamination of evidence. Whenever possible, approach the crime scene in a manner least destructive to potential evidence.
- 2.** If there are no suspects at or near the scene, the officer's primary responsibility shall be to render assistance to any victims present. If a victim is obviously dead, do not disturb the body.
- 3.** It is critical that the crime scene be secured from all non-essential personnel in order to prevent the contamination and or destruction of evidence. This may best be accomplished using crime scene tape, rope, signs, barricades or additional officers. Personnel at the scene must not disturb, touch or handle any physical evidence, unless a danger exists that evidence will be lost or destroyed prior to processing by authorized personnel. Should this situation arise, it shall become the responsibility of the officer(s) at the scene to mark, seal, tag and preserve the evidence.

- a. The shift supervisor shall be responsible for determining whether investigative or patrol personnel will be responsible for the collection and preservation of evidence at the scene. As a general policy, investigative personnel will be responsible for processing crime scenes requiring specialized techniques, which may include;
  - 1) Photographs/Videotapes
  - 2) Latent Fingerprints
  - 3) Cast Impressions
  - 4) Sketches/Diagrams
- b. Investigators/officers who are responsible for processing the scene shall be responsible for all aspects of the collection of evidence (i.e.: collection, preservation, transportation and documentation). All evidence will be properly marked, tagged and submitted to Property Management in accordance with this general order and General Order 88-1-44, Property Management.
- c. When a major incident occurs which requires a greater degree of expertise and/or resources than can be adequately provided by police department personnel, the Connecticut State Police Major Crime Unit may be requested. This determination shall be made by the Commander of the Operations Division or designee. In such cases, the Major Crime Unit shall be responsible for the collection, preservation and associated documentation of all evidence at the scene. Investigators/officers at the scene shall secure the scene until the Unit's arrival.

**B** Personnel involved in the documenting and processing of physical evidence at the scene must ensure that methods used are those that will preserve the condition of evidence in the process of collection, prevent the introduction of foreign materials to it, and ensure as complete a sample as possible and practical. The following procedures shall govern the processing of such evidence in order to ensure that these objectives are satisfied.

1. Observations and notes/reports taken at the Scene - Initial observations, original notes/reports taken at the scene are the most readily available record of the crime scene. These notes must be referred to when completing any or all finished reports required and upon completion of said reports, will be included as part of the case report.
  - a. Types of information which normally should be recorded at the scene includes:
    - 1) Case Number
    - 2) Date and Time of arrival at scene
    - 3) Location of scene
    - 4) Name of victim
    - 5) Name of suspect, if known
    - 6) Actions taken at scene

- 7) Name of person(s) processing evidence
- b. Initial observations and/or notations which should be made include:
- 1) Observe and record
  - 2) Determine nature and extent of crime scene
  - 3) Determine location of evidence
  - 4) Determine order of collection
  - 5) Establish best working route
  - 6) Duplicate movement of perpetrator in thought, and plan, and search accordingly.
  - 7) Note all existing conditions.
  - 8) Note items out of place or damaged.
  - 9) Note relationship between items.
- c. A crime scene sketch/diagram will normally be prepared for major crimes only. However, when utilized it will contain, at a minimum, the following information;
- 1) Incident number
  - 2) Time and date of preparation
  - 3) Location of offense
  - 4) Location of items of evidence in the scene
  - 5) Location and names of victims, witnesses, and suspects
  - 6) Relationship of crime scene to other rooms, building or roads.
  - 7) Name of person preparing sketch
  - 8) Direction of North
  - 9) What lights were on or off
  - 10) What windows were open
  - 11) Radio/television, etc., on or off
2. Photographs and/or videotaping of the crime scene. Any photographs or videotapes of a crime scene should be taken by a trained photographer and must be taken prior to the processing of the evidence. Videotapes may supplement, but should not replace still photographs.

- a. Although the types of photographs may vary with each crime scene, they will normally consist of the following types;
    - 1) Overall Photographs - These photographs should be taken from several different locations. If an interior scene is taken, a wide angle lens should be used. Photographs of the surrounding area should be included.
    - 2) Midrange Photographs - These photographs should be utilized to orient the viewer as to the exact location of items of evidence. Whenever possible, two items of evidence should be in the field of view. If this is not possible, a common item (desk, bed, table, etc.) should be included in all midrange photographs.
      - a) Midrange photographs should always be taken with a normal lens to prevent distortion.
    - 3) Close-up Photographs - These photographs should be taken so that the item fills the field of vision. Take one close-up shot with a scale (i.e: six inch ruler etc).
  - b. A record of each photograph taken must be maintained. Information to be recorded will include;
    - 1) Date and Time of exposure
    - 2) Name of person taking photographs
    - 3) A brief description of each photograph
    - 4) Photograph number (1, 2, 3 ...etc.)
3. Collection of Evidence - The Physical Evidence Collection Guide, should be used as a reference by personnel involved in the collection of physical evidence. The guide contains information regarding the collection, packaging and submission of different types of physical evidence to the State Lab for analysis. It is important to note that the guide should be used to provide general guidelines. These may however, be instances where it is necessary to deviate from the prescribed procedures.
- a. When collecting items of evidence, the following should be considered;
    - 1) Using tongs, tweezers, or rubber gloves when possible. Avoid touching the item with hands or anything which might contaminate the item.
    - 2) Collecting perishable items first. If the destruction of evidence is not a concern, collect evidence in a logical sequence, trying to avoid disruption of other items of evidence.
  - b. As a general rule, forensic laboratories can only compare known items with items showing similar characteristics. Therefore, sufficient specimens or controls (i.e. known samples) must be submitted for comparison of such items as hairs, fibers, fabrics, paint, glass, wood, soil and tool-marks.
  - c. When processing the crime scene for latent fingerprints, the following factors should be taken into consideration,

- 1) The size of the item to be dusted
  - 2) The type of surface
  - 3) The potential for destruction if moved. If movement or transporting the object will destroy latent prints, the object should be processed at the scene.
- d. Computer equipment can be severely damaged and/or data can be lost permanently lost due to improper start up or shut down procedures. Whenever computer equipment is to be seized as a result of an arrest or a warrant, the investigating officer shall notify the Department's Computer Systems Administrator.
- 1) Whenever possible, a computer forensics expert will respond to the scene, or if that is not possible, advise the investigating officers on the proper procedures in safeguarding the integrity of the data and the equipment that is to be seized.
- e. When it appears that the collection of evidence at the scene has been completed, a final thorough search of the scene should be conducted in case any evidence has been overlooked. Whenever possible, an officer unassociated with the processing should be utilized.
4. Measurements, Sketching/Diagramming of the Scene - The obtaining of wall, room and building measurements should be one of the last operations to be performed in the processing of a crime scene. Such measurements are critical in the development of the final crime scene sketch/diagram, but must be obtained last, so as not to contaminate or destroy evidence.
- C The vehicle utilized by Investigative personnel will contain, at a minimum, the following equipment to assist in the collection of evidence at a crime scene.
1. Latent Fingerprint Recovery Equipment
    - a. Brushes (Fiberglass, Magnetic, etc.)
    - b. Powder (Various Kinds)
    - c. Lifting Tape
    - d. Blank Cards for print recovery
    - e. Magnifying glass
  2. Photographic equipment
    - a. Digital Camera
    - b. Additional Memory Card
    - c. Extra Batteries
  3. Sketching Equipment

- a. Pad of graph paper on clip board
  - b. Pencils/Erasers
  - c. Templates
  - d. 100' Tape
  - e. Ruler (6" or 12")
4. Casting Impression Kit
  5. Masking Tape
  6. Marking Pens
  7. Paper Bags (various sizes)
  8. Evidence Tape
  9. Glassine Envelopes
  10. Paper Envelopes
  11. Plastic Bags (Baggies & Garbage Bags)
  12. Scissors
  13. Flashlight
  14. Tongs, tweezers or similar tool
  15. Scribe

**D** Whenever photographs are not taken, or when physical evidence is not recovered from the scene of a serious crime against person or property (i.e.: homicide, rape, arson, robbery, major assault etc.); the investigator assigned will prepare a report giving the reason(s) why these things were not done. This may be accomplished using an Incident/Arrest or Supplemental Report.

**E** The following procedures govern the timing and conditions for submitting evidence to the Forensic and Toxicology Laboratories.

1. As a general policy, the officer in charge of the crime scene investigation or designee will be responsible for determining what evidence, if any, will be submitted to one or more of the following laboratories:
  - a. Connecticut Department of Health Services Toxicology Laboratory
  - b. Connecticut State Police Forensic Laboratory
  - c. F.B.I. Laboratory

2. When it is determined that an item of evidence will be submitted to either a Toxicology or Forensic Laboratory, it shall be submitted as soon as practicable. Barring extenuating circumstances, such evidence shall be submitted within seven (7) days of receipt.
    - a. Under normal circumstances, this process will be the responsibility of Property Management personnel. However, when circumstances dictate that evidence be sent immediately from the scene to a lab, this responsibility shall be delegated to the officer in charge of the crime scene.
  3. Evidence shall be properly documented by and/or submitted to Property Management in accordance with the provisions of this and General Order 88-1-44, Property Management, prior to submission to a laboratory.
  4. When an item of evidence has been collected, that by its very nature may deteriorate (e.g., a liquid sample of semen, a blood soaked shirt, etc.) it should be transported to the forensic or toxicology lab the same day, if at all possible. In these instances, the lab should be called first, so that they are prepared to receive said evidence.
    - a. In those cases where immediate transport is not possible, the item shall be secured in accordance with the General Order 88-1-44, Property Management.
  5. In instances when a laboratory requires a known specimen to accompany the item submitted and the known specimen has not yet been obtained, the officer(s) assigned to the case will be responsible for obtaining the specimen, following legal procedures and for submitting same to Property Management.
- F When a stolen vehicle is recovered by an officer of this department, the following procedures shall be implemented;
1. The desk officer/dispatcher shall identify and contact the reporting agency, if the stolen vehicle report did not originate with this department. It will be the responsibility of the reporting agency to cancel the stolen vehicle entry in the NCIC/Collect System and to notify the vehicle's owner of its recovery and specifics concerning its condition.
    - a. The reporting agency should advise this department as to whether to hold the vehicle for processing by their agency, or have the vehicle removed in accordance with General Order 90-3-79, Traffic Ancillary Services.
  2. The shift supervisor shall determine if investigative personnel shall be requested to process a stolen vehicle for evidence. Generally, this determination will be based on the existence of evidence and additional criminal activity, which may have involved the vehicle.
    - a. When processing is required, it shall be conducted in the same manner as other crime scenes. If it can be accomplished at the scene, then it should be processed there and then towed from the scene. Otherwise, the vehicle shall be towed to a designated area for processing (i.e.: headquarters, forensic lab, other agency, etc.).

3. When it is determined that processing the vehicle for evidence will not be conducted, the investigating officer will be responsible for inventorying the contents of the vehicle for evidence and/or valuables and removing said vehicle in accordance with General Order 90-3-79, Traffic Auxiliary Services and 88-1-44, Property Management.

#### IV PROCEDURES (AT-SCENE EVIDENCE RECORDS)

A For physical evidence to be accepted by the court at the time of trial, it is essential that the chain of evidence be maintained. The initial step in this process is marking or labeling and packaging the items at the time it is collected, seized or received. The following guidelines shall govern this process; (also view appendix)

##### 1. Marking and Labeling Evidence;

- a. In many instances, marking and labeling of evidence may represent a single process. In those instances where the evidence is of such a large size or nature, complete identifying data may be recorded directly on the evidence. This will include the officer name, date, time and location of recovery, item number and incident number.
- b. In other instances, the smaller size, or nature of the item collected will not permit that complete information to be noted directly on the item; in these instances, the container, envelope or attached tag should be marked.
- c. The crime scene search officer should establish the habit of marking similar items in the same location; (e.g. on the trouser band or under the right front pocket of the trouser, or on the right hand side of a hand gun.) This will save time and embarrassment in looking for identifying marks when asked to identify the evidence on the witness stand.
- d. Instruments which may be used for marking physical evidence include permanent markers (felt pens) scribes (diamond tip or awl), or where labels are used, ball point pens.
- e. Each officer or investigator should develop his own identifying mark. Normally it should be his initial, but it may be some other mark. An adequate and convenient test of the suitability of evidence marking is to ask yourself the following question: If I never see this item again, until I am seated on the witness stand, will I be able to state that this is the item I collected at a particular location in connection with this particular case, to the exclusion of all other evidence I have handled in this case or any other case.

##### 2. Packaging Evidence;

- a. The collecting officer(s) should choose a container suitable to the type of evidence he intends to package. Consideration in choosing the proper container includes:
  - 1) The size and weight of the item
  - 2) Whether the item is moist (which could rot or deteriorate, if packaged in plastic or an air-tight container)
  - 3) Wet (soaked items) must be air-dried prior to packaging in paper and transport



- 4) The collecting officer(s) should refer to the Physical Evidence Collection Guide for suggested packaging data for many different types of evidence
    - b. The officer should avoid any contamination of evidence by packaging all items separately.
    - c. Fluids or stains should not be allowed to touch and should be carefully rolled in paper.
    - d. Pack items to minimize interior movement within the package.
    - e. Seal the package with tape.
    - f. The collecting officer should initial across the seal.
    - g. The officer should label and identify the exterior of the package as to content.
    - h. Whenever possible, the package should be labeled before placing the evidence in it, so as not to damage contents while writing on it.
- B** All items of evidence shall be inventoried using a combination of Incident/Arrest, Supplemental and Property Receipt/Report Forms. Available information shall include;
1. A complete description of the item (including make, model, and serial number) if any.
  2. The Source. (From whom or the location which the item was obtained.)
  3. The name of the person collecting the item.
- C** The officer(s) and/or investigators responsible for processing the crime or accident scene shall prepare a detailed report which accurately depicts the events which transpired at the scene of the crime.
1. Elements of particular importance which shall be included in the report include;
    - a. Case Number
    - b. Date and Time of arrival at scene
    - c. Location of the crime
    - d. Name of victims, if known
    - e. Name of suspects, if known
    - f. Action taken at the scene, (i.e.; number of photographs taken, were measurements taken, listing of physical evidence taken, etc.)
  2. Additional information that should be included, when outside specialists (i.e; Major Crime Unit) is involved, is;
    - a. Date and time the request for service was given

- b. Time of arrival
- c. Name of investigating officer(s)
- d. Disposition of physical evidence, exposed negatives, and measurements/sketches, etc.

**D** Each time there is a transfer of custody of physical evidence, said transfer will be documented using a Property/Evidence Chain of Custody or similar form.

- 1. Information contained on this form shall include at a minimum;
  - a. Case Number
  - b. Item Number and/or description of property
  - c. Date and time of transfer
  - d. Reason for the transfer

**E** Whenever physical evidence is submitted to a laboratory for examination, specific prior custody information shall be documented in order to maintain a chain of evidence. At a minimum, this information shall include;

- 1. Name of this officer/property management personnel last having custody of the item.
- 2. Date and time of submission or mailing and method used for transmission (i.e; mail, courier, etc.).
- 3. Date and time of receipt by the laboratory.
- 4. Name and signature of the person in the laboratory receiving the evidence.

**F** When an item of physical evidence is submitted to a laboratory for examination, a Request for Examination of Physical Evidence or Evidence Examination Request and Findings Forms must be completed and accompany said evidence. All such requests, as a matter of standard policy, shall be answered via a final written report.

- 1. If a laboratory provides a verbal report, it shall always be followed by a written report.

**V** **PROCEDURES (TRAINING)**

**A** While patrol officers may or may not have the responsibility for processing crime scenes, it is expected that they will normally be the first officer at the scene. As such, it is important that officers receive, at minimum familiarization training in crime and accident scene processing.

- 1. Such training is accomplished as a result of;
  - a. Basic recruit training at the POSTC Academy
  - b. Field Training Programs for probationary recruits
  - c. In-Service Training, if available

- d. Roll-Call Training, as needed
- 2. General Topics of instruction include;
  - a. Departmental policies and procedures
  - b. Principles of Investigation
  - c. Crime scene procedures
  - d. Interview and Interrogation
  - e. Criminal Statements
  - f. Fingerprinting
  - g. Photography
  - h. Case investigation techniques
  - i. Accident Investigation
- B** In order to ensure development of specific skills, specialized training programs will be provided to officers and Investigators responsible for crime scene processing. Said training will include instruction in the following topics;
  - 1. Recovery of latent fingerprints and palm prints.
  - 2. Recovery of foot, tool, and tire impressions.
  - 3. Photographing crime and accident scenes.
  - 4. Preparing crime and accident scene sketches.
  - 5. Collecting, preserving, and recording physical evidence (including DNA evidence).
- C** The Training Office shall be responsible for providing/scheduling refresher training for Investigative personnel in crime scene processing. This Training will be a part of the department's In-Service Training Program.
  - 1. The primary goal of the training will be to reinforce crime scene processing techniques now in use as well as introduce new and innovative techniques and equipment.

## **VI PROCEDURES (ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION)**

- A** A crime scene/accident processor shall be available on a 24-hour basis.
  - 1. Because the Investigative Section does not operate on a 24-hour basis, personnel assigned to this section will be rotated on an on-call (stand-by) schedule. When on-call, investigative personnel will be immediately available to respond to a crime scene or accident upon request.

2. Patrol officers who have received specialized training in traffic accident investigation may be also be called to duty in order to assume command and/or assist in the investigation.
3. In the event of a major crime, the Connecticut State Police Major Crime Unit may be requested to collect and process a crime scene. The Major Crime Unit is available on a 24-hour basis.

**B** In many cases, the implementation or continuation of the investigative process must await the completion of certain aspects of the work of the personnel responsible for the collection of evidence. Therefore, it is important that notification be made as soon as possible. All notifications will be made within one hour of when the need is realized.

1. When notified, investigators on-call shall arrive at the crime scene as soon as possible.
2. Due to the proximity of the Major Crime Unit to the Town of New Canaan there may be a delay in its arrival at the scene. Shift supervisors should attempt to obtain an estimated time of arrival so that resources and manpower may be assigned, as necessary.

**C** The shift supervisor shall be responsible for determining whether investigative personnel shall be responsible for the collection and preservation of a crime scene. When so assigned, investigative personnel shall report to the crime scene and assume responsibility for the investigation. The first responding officer will generally brief investigative personnel on the incident. The patrol officer will assist the investigator or secure the scene as requested.

1. In cases where the Connecticut State Police Major Crime Unit is requested to handle the collection and preservation of evidence, the shift supervisor will be designated the scene commander, unless relieved of command by a higher ranking officer.
  - a. The scene commander should coordinate his activities with that of the Major Crimes Unit.
  - b. The supervisor of the Major Crime Unit shall be responsible for directing and coordinating Major Crime Unit Personnel.

## **VII DISTRIBUTION**

This general order will be reproduced in electronic and traditional media. All sworn personnel shall have access to Department general orders through a read-only file on their individual domain of the Department's computer network. Printed copies and/or CD's will also be placed in locations throughout headquarters so that they are easily accessible to all personnel.

## **VIII EFFECTIVE DATE**

This general order approved by the Police Commission on July 22, 1992 and is effective on September 1, 1992.

Reviewed April 2000

Per Order

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Edward J. Nadriczny  
Chief of Police