

# GENERAL ORDER



<b>Title</b>		
<b>Crime Scene Response and Evidence Collection</b>		
<b>Topic</b>	<b>Series</b>	<b>Number</b>
<b>OPS</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Effective Date</b>		
<b>August 28, 2023</b>		
<b>Replaces:</b>		
GO-OPS-304.08 (Crime Scene Response and Evidence Collection), Effective Date December 18, 2018		
<b>Rescinds:</b>		
EO-16-006 (Use of the Axon Capture Application: Reporting, Classification, and Equipment), Effective Date August 2, 2016		

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

I.	Purpose	Page	1
III.	Procedures	Page	1
III.A	General	Page	1
III.B	Initial Response	Page	2
III.C	Evidence Collection	Page	3
III.D	Evidence Packaging and Documentation	Page	5
III.E	Submission of Evidence for Forensic Analysis	Page	6
III.F	Equipment and Supplies	Page	6
IV.	Definitions	Page	7
V.	Attachments	Page	7

### I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this general order is to provide protocols for responding to and collecting evidence at crime scenes. This order differentiates the crime scene and evidentiary responsibilities of Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) members from those of Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) evidence technicians.

### II. PROCEDURES

#### A. General

1. The Department of Forensic Science (DFS) is legally mandated to collect evidence for the District of Columbia. MPD provides limited assistance with evidence collection in accordance with the provisions set forth in this order. If there is any question as to the type of response that a scene requires, a DFS supervisor shall be contacted for guidance.
2. Only trained members shall process scenes and collect evidence. All evidence shall be collected in accordance with Attachment A (Responsibilities for Processing Incidents and Crime Scenes).
3. Members shall handle all recovered evidence in accordance with [GO-601.01 \(Recording, Handling and Disposition of Property Coming into the Custody of the Department\)](#) and ensure that each item is properly

documented in a manner that attributes each specific item to a certain victim, suspect, or scene.

4. No scene occurring within a residence, vehicle, or other area where there is an expectation of privacy shall be processed without confirmation that the search is lawfully conducted pursuant to [GO-SPT-602.01 \(Vehicle Searches and Inventories\)](#), [GO-PCA-702.02 \(Warrantless Searches\)](#) and/or [GO-PCA-702.03 \(Search Warrants\)](#).
5. MPD members detailed to DFS shall be considered DFS employees for the purposes of this order.

**B. Initial Response**

1. The first member to arrive on scene assumes full responsibility for protecting the scene until relieved by a supervisor, assigned member, or evidence technician.
2. The first responding member shall use the crime or incident type to ascertain the responsibilities required for proper scene preservation. The member shall, as applicable to the scene:
  - a. Promptly, yet cautiously, approach and enter the scene for the purpose of locating victims, identifying potential hazards (e.g., firearms, explosives, chemicals, and other toxic substances), and apprehending suspects.
  - b. Render aid to victims and protect all those present at the scene from suspects in the vicinity.
  - c. Use caution to avoid destroying or diminishing the value of any evidence by limiting movement and securing the scene from all unauthorized persons by:
    - (1) Using all possible means to avoid disturbing and cross contaminating potential sources of evidence (e.g., DNA, footprints, or tire marks);
    - (2) Establishing boundaries by securing the initial point of the incident and extending the area of protection outward toward the perimeter. Ensure that the nature of the incident and potential for the existence of physical evidence dictate the size and scope of the search area.
    - (3) Setting up physical barriers (e.g., tape, vehicles, and personnel) or using existing boundaries (e.g., doors, walls, and gates).
  - d. Prevent unauthorized persons from altering or destroying physical

evidence by restricting movement, location, and activity while maintaining safety at the scene. Only persons responsible for providing critical care to victims and members investigating, securing, and processing the scene shall be permitted to enter the scene.

- e. Ensure that at least one member is assigned to maintain a roster of names of all persons who enter the scene.
- f. Request through the Office of Unified Communications (OUC), the services of a trained MPD member or DFS evidence technician based upon the type of scene pursuant to Attachment A. In the event that a trained member from the district of occurrence is needed but unavailable at the time of request, the requesting member's immediate supervisor may request assistance from another district.
- g. Prior to departure from the scene, brief the member conducting the investigation.
- h. Prepare an offense report containing all relevant information. Whenever applicable, the report should include a description of transient evidence (e.g., smells, sounds, sights), atmospheric conditions (e.g., temperature, weather), and lighting conditions (e.g., street lights, daylight).

#### C. Evidence Collection

- 1. Incident type and the existence of evidence shall necessitate the level of response required for the scene.
- 2. Photographic Documentation
  - a. Axon Capture is the application that enables the photographic documentation by members equipped with a body worn camera (BWC) and a department-issued cell phone. The Axon Capture application shall be used exclusively for taking photographs for law enforcement purposes. Members assigned BWCs shall document scenes that require photographs **only**.
  - b. Members authorized to use the Axon Capture application shall do so using their department-issued cell phone only.
  - c. Members shall not use the Axon Capture application to record video or audio unless exigent circumstances exist or at the direction of an element watch commander.
  - d. Absent exigent circumstances, members shall not use their personal equipment (e.g., personal cell phones) to take

photographs or record videos of evidence or crime scenes. In the event that members use their personal equipment to take photographs or recordings, they shall email the files to a BWC unit coordinator for inclusion into [evidence.com](https://evidence.com) prior to the end of their shift.

- e. Primary units responding to scenes who are not BWC-equipped shall request a BWC-equipped unit to respond to the scene to take photographs.
- f. Use of the Axon Capture application does not relieve members of their responsibility to properly document the details of the incident in all related police reports.
- g. Members shall upload photographs to [evidence.com](https://evidence.com) prior to going back into service. If this is not possible, members shall ensure that photographs are uploaded prior to the end of their shift.
- h. Members shall annotate their photographs with the proper central complaint number (CCN) in the ID field and category that relates to the crime or incident in the same manner they would with a BWC recording, in accordance with [GO-SPT-302.13 \(Body-Worn Camera Program\)](#). All uploaded photographs uploaded to [evidence.com](https://evidence.com) will be accessible to the members who took the photos, their supervisors, and prosecutors.
- i. Members shall document the existence or pending upload of photographs to [evidence.com](https://evidence.com) by including, at the beginning of the offense report narrative, "Axon Capture - Photographs Uploaded to [evidence.com](https://evidence.com)".

### 3. Latent Fingerprints

- a. In all cases where latent fingerprints are recovered, members shall:
  - (1) Prepare PD Forms 668 (Evidence Report) or 698 (Supplementary Evidence Report), as applicable;
  - (2) Ensure that all latent fingerprint lift backing cards are properly numbered and contain the member's name, date, location, CCN, and item numbers; and
  - (3) Complete a PD Form 307 (Latent Fingerprint Jacket), containing the latent fingerprint lift backing cards.
- b. All requests for latent fingerprint comparisons shall be submitted on a DFS Evidence Submission Form which shall be forwarded with the latent prints to the DFS Fingerprint Intelligence Unit via [dfs.fiu@dc.gov](mailto:dfs.fiu@dc.gov) for immediate comparison.

- c. Members with reliable information on a suspect, but insufficient information [e.g., police department identification number (PDID), date of birth] to complete a DFS Evidence Submission Form, shall request assistance from a supervisor at the Fingerprint Intelligence Unit by calling (202) 481-3542.

#### 4. Cartridge Casings

- a. It is critical that members who locate cartridge casings on crime scenes do not do anything that may unintentionally contaminate forensic processing of cartridge casings and/or other evidence.
- b. Members shall secure the entire crime scene for processing (e.g., with crime scene tape) in accordance with this order. Other attempts to mark cartridge casing locations are **prohibited** (e.g., outlining cartridge casings with chalk and placing items over the top of the casings)
- c. Canine officers conducting searches may use flags to mark locations of cartridge casings in tall grass or shrubs.
- d. In all cases where cartridge casings are recovered, members shall document the location and take overall, mid-range, and close-up photographs of each cartridge casing prior to packaging.

#### 5. Buccal Swabs

In cases where buccal swabs are collected in connection with a gun arrest where the gun was (or will be) swabbed for DNA, members shall complete a buccal swab search warrant affidavit and warrant and email the drafts along with a completed Giglio form and the member's department cell phone number to [usadc.lu.list.buccals@usdoj.gov](mailto:usadc.lu.list.buccals@usdoj.gov) (subject line: LU List Buccal – Defendant's First and Last Names – CCN). Once the USAO receives the judge-signed warrant, they will submit it to the Central Cell Block (CCB) email group for execution.

#### D. Evidence Packaging and Documentation

1. Members shall ensure that **all** recovered items are properly packaged and documented by:
  - a. Obtaining crime scene log numbers by accessing the Crime Scene Assignment Log Book on the MPD Intranet homepage, prior to the end of the member's shift.
    - (1) When Axon Capture photographs are the only form of evidence submitted, Crime Scene Assignment Log Book entries are not required. However, when any other

evidence collection technique is used, even when usable evidence is not recovered, crime scene log numbers shall be obtained.

- (2) When problems or questions arise, members should email [csid.adminbox@dc.gov](mailto:csid.adminbox@dc.gov).
  - b. Separately documenting each item with the required information (e.g., crime scene log number, date, address, offense type);
  - c. Ensuring that all evidence bags are labeled with the member's name, date, location, CCN, and item number;
  - d. Preparing all applicable police reports (e.g., offense report and PD Forms 668 and 698); and
  - e. Completing and attaching a PD Form 285 (Property Tag) to the item.
2. Members shall complete a PD Form 668 or 698, as applicable. Documentation of the location of the scene, time of notification or dispatch, time of arrival, assessment of the existing physical evidence (e.g., latent fingerprints, photographs, shell casings, and buccal swabs), and time of departure shall be included. All PD Forms 668 and 698 shall be reviewed and signed by a supervising official.
  3. Element property officers shall ensure that evidence is properly packaged, labeled and submitted to DFS, or the Evidence Control Branch, as appropriate. All items shall be properly documented with the required information (e.g., CSES number, date, address, offense type), securely sealed, documented in the evidence database, and labeled with a barcode.
- E. Submission of Evidence for Forensic Analysis
1. Forensic testing and analysis for all offenses investigated by MPD shall be conducted by DFS.
  2. Members shall attach a DFS Evidence Submission Form to all forensic testing and analysis requests.
  3. DFS Central Evidence Unit personnel complete evidence entries in the Laboratory Information Management System for MPD.
- F. Staffing and Equipment
1. District commanding officials shall ensure that there are an adequate number of trained members to recover fingerprints, cartridge casings, and buccal swabs.

2. The Metropolitan Police Academy (MPA) commanding official shall ensure that members are properly trained to recover fingerprints, collect cartridge casings, and collect buccal swabs and that training records of all members certified to process crime scenes are maintained.
  - a. Physical evidence collection kits shall be assigned to newly trained members and electronically tracked.
  - b. An updated list of certified members shall submitted to all district commanding officials, MPD members assigned to DFS, and the Technical and Analytical Services Bureau (TASB) for publication on the MPD intranet home page.
  - b. A refresher course shall be conducted each calendar year for all trained members.
3. District commanding officials shall ensure that a district crime scene search coordinator at the rank of sergeant or above is designated to facilitate the collection and forwarding of reports to DFS and act as a liaison between the district and DFS.
4. District crime scene coordinators shall coordinate with the Equipment and Supplies Branch (ESB) to ensure proper control, replacement, and inspection of issued supplies and equipment. The ESB commanding official shall ensure that evidence collection supplies are maintained.

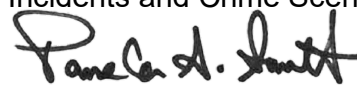
**IV. DEFINITIONS**

When used in this directive, the following terms shall have the meanings designated.

	<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
1.	Serious bodily injury	Extreme physical pain, illness, or impairment of physical condition, including physical injury, that involves a substantial risk of death, protracted and obvious disfigurement, protracted loss or impairment of the function of a bodily member or organ, or protracted loss of consciousness.
2.	Trained members	Sworn members trained and equipped to collect evidence according to Attachment A. Members previously trained as reserve crime scene officers are considered trained members when they are sufficiently trained and equipped to operate under the provisions of this order.

**V. ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Responsibilities for Processing Incidents and Crime Scenes

  
 Pamela A. Smith  
 Acting Chief of Police

**Attachment A: Responsibilities for Processing Incidents and Crime Scenes**

Members with Axon Capture	Trained Members	DFS-Required Response
<p>AXON Capture-equipped members shall document the following crime scenes and incidents, <b><u>when photographs are the only form of forensic documentation required:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Simple assaults</li> <li>Destruction of property, including damage to MPD property</li> <li>MPD and government-owned vehicle traffic crashes resulting in minor injuries or minor property damage only</li> <li>Use of force investigations resulting in no injuries or only minor injuries to the officers or subjects, unless the scene involves a serious use of force investigation as defined in <a href="#">GO-RAR-901.07 (Use of Force)</a></li> <li>Minor injuries to MPD members</li> <li>Assaults on police officers resulting in no injuries or only minor injuries</li> <li>Robberies where there is no forensic evidence, excluding those that fall under the DFS-Required Response category</li> <li>Random gunfire calls for service involving minor property damage where there are no cartridge casings present</li> <li>Fireworks violations, except when a firework has been identified as an improvised explosive device (IED)</li> <li>Select assignments requested by officials</li> <li>Misdemeanor offenses, excluding those that fall under the Trained Members or DFS-Required Response categories</li> <li>When directed by element watch commander</li> </ol> <p><b>NOTE:</b> DFS response is required for all suspected bias-related and connected events where evidence may link multiple incidents.</p>	<p>Trained members shall process the following crimes scenes and incidents, <b><u>when fingerprints, cartridge casings, or buccal swabs are the only form of forensic documentation required:</u></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-violent burglaries               <p><b>NOTE:</b> In burglaries resulting in over \$5,000 worth of stolen property, members shall notify the element watch commander who may request DFS response</p> </li> <li>The following types of non-violent, vehicle-related crimes:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recovered stolen automobiles (local and interstate) except automobiles used in carjackings</li> <li>Unauthorized use of a vehicle</li> <li>Thefts from automobiles involving:                   <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cases closed by arrest</li> <li>Known suspects and evidence that may assist in case closure</li> <li>Stolen items over \$5,000 in value</li> <li>Sensitive material, weapons, or other items that may require official government notification</li> <li>Government vehicles</li> <li>Serial or related events</li> </ol> <p><b>NOTE:</b> Other thefts from automobiles may be processed for forensic evidence at the discretion of the trained member, supervisors, or element watch commander.</p> </li> </ol> </li> <li>Random gunfire calls for service involving no damage or minor property damage where cartridge casings are present but no other forensic evidence exists</li> <li>When directed by element watch commander</li> </ol> <p><b>NOTE:</b> DFS response is required for all suspected bias-related and connected events where evidence may link multiple incidents.</p>	<p>DFS shall be notified to process:</p> <p>A. All crime scenes and incidents involving potential items of evidence that may require forensic testing other than fingerprints, cartridge casings, and/or buccal swabs.</p> <p>B. All of the following crimes scenes regardless of the type of evidence present:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All deaths and aggravated assaults, including traffic fatalities</li> <li>Unconscious persons where the cause of the injury and commission of a crime are unknown</li> <li>All physical abuse, sexual assaults, and attempted sexual assaults investigated by the Adult Sexual Assault Unit or the Youth and Family Services Division</li> <li>The following types of robberies and carjackings:           <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial institutions, armored cars, and United States Postal facilities</li> <li>Resulting in serious bodily injury</li> <li>Where the complainant's recovered property involves potential items of evidence that may require forensic testing (other than fingerprints, cartridge casings, and/or buccal swabs).</li> <li>Where evidence containing potential DNA is present</li> <li>Where forensic evidence is present that cannot be processed using photographs</li> </ol> </li> <li>Recovered stolen automobiles (local and interstate) used in carjackings</li> <li>Missing persons where the scene dictates a serious bodily injury has occurred or foul play is suspected (e.g., kidnappings)</li> <li>Incident involving a firearm or the recovery of a firearm, except those recovered by the Violent Crime Suppression Division.</li> <li>All firearm discharges by MPD members and other law enforcement agencies within the District of Columbia</li> <li>MPD and government-owned vehicle traffic crashes resulting in significant or serious injuries or substantial vehicle damage</li> <li>All serious use of force investigations as defined in <a href="#">GO-RAR-901.07 (Use of Force)</a> and use of force investigations resulting in significant or serious injuries to officers or subjects</li> <li>Serious bodily injuries to MPD officers</li> <li>Assaults on police officers resulting in serious bodily injuries</li> <li>Other major offenses (e.g., burglaries with serious bodily injury, bombings, arsons, explosions, extortion,)</li> <li>Suspected bias-related and connected events where evidence may link multiple incidents, regardless of crime or incident type.</li> </ol>