

GENERAL ORDER



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Title Crime Scene Response and Evidence Collection		
Topic	Series	Number
OPS	304	08
Effective Date December 18, 2018		
Replaces: GO-OPS-304.08 (Crime Scene Response and Evidence Collection), Effective Date February 27, 2018		

I.	Policy	Page	1
II.	Procedures	Page	1
II. A	General Procedures	Page	1
II. B	Initial Response	Page	2
II. C	Evidence Collection	Page	4
II. D	Evidence Packaging and Documentation	Page	6
II. E	Submission of Evidence for Forensic Analysis	Page	7
III.	Roles and Responsibilities	Page	7
IV.	Definitions	Page	9
V.	Attachments	Page	9

I. POLICY

The purpose of this 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 Procedures

1. The collection of physical evidence shall occur in accordance with Attachment A of this order. If there is any question as to the type of response that a scene requires, the watch commander shall contact a DFS supervisor for guidance.
2. Members shall be responsible for processing all recovered evidence in accordance with GO-601.01 (Recording, Handling and Disposition of Property Coming into the Custody of the Department).
3. 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 being conducted pursuant to valid consent or a warrant authorizing the search.

4. Items of recovered evidence shall be documented in a manner that attributes each specific item to a certain victim, suspect, or scene.
 5. Photographing Scenes Using Axon Capture
 - a. The AXON Capture application shall be used exclusively for taking photographs for law enforcement purposes.
 - b. Members authorized to use the Axon Capture application shall do so using their Department-issued cell phone only. Members are prohibited from using the Axon Capture application on their personal cell phone or other electronic device.
 - 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 body worn camera unit coordinator for inclusion into evidence.com prior to the end of their shift.
 6. Department of Forensic Science
 1. DFS is legally mandated to collect evidence for the District of Columbia. MPD provides limited assistance with evidence collection in strict accordance with the provisions set forth in Attachment A of this order.
 2. DFS Central Evidence Unit personnel complete evidence entries in the Laboratory Information Management System for MPD.
 3. 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 be responsible for the following initial response procedures, 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 in accordance with Attachment A of this order.

NOTE: 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. Evidence shall be collected in accordance with Attachment A of this order. Incident type and the existence of evidence shall necessitate the level of response required for the scene.

2. Axon Capture Application

- a. Members assigned BWCs who are equipped with Department cell phones with the AXON Capture application shall document scenes that require photographs **only**.

Example: A member equipped with the Axon Capture application may photograph a shattered car window (i.e., destruction of property) scene. Scenes requiring more elaborate forensic techniques (e.g., robbery of a commercial establishment) **shall not** be documented solely by the Axon Capture.

- b. Primary units responding to scenes that are suitable for photographing via the Axon Capture but who are not equipped with the requisite cell phone shall request that a unit equipped with Axon Capture respond to the scene and take photographs.
- c. 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.
- d. Categorization and Annotation of Axon Capture Photographs
 - (1) Members shall upload photographs to 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.
 - (2) 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).
- e. Members shall document the existence or pending upload of photographs to evidence.com by including the following statements at the beginning of the narrative of the associated report:

- (1) "Axon Capture - Photographs Uploaded to evidence.com".
- (2) The member's last name, first name, and Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) number.

NOTE: All uploaded photographs captured with the Axon Capture application will be uploaded to evidence.com and accessible to the members who took the photos, their supervisors, and prosecutors.

3. Latent Fingerprints

- a. Only members trained in latent fingerprint recovery shall collect fingerprint evidence.
- b. Trained MPD members shall only recover fingerprints according to the provisions set forth in Attachment A of this order.
- c. 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.
- d. Members shall submit all latent fingerprints to DFS.
- e. All requests for latent fingerprint comparisons shall be submitted on a DFS Evidence Submission Form.
- f. The DFS Evidence Submission Form shall be forwarded with the latent prints to the DFS Fingerprint Intelligence Unit for immediate comparison via dfs.fiu@dc.gov.
- g. Members with reliable information on a suspect, but insufficient information (e.g., 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. Shell Casings

- a. Only members authorized by their district commander and trained in recovery shall collect shell casings.

- b. Trained MPD members shall only collect shell casings according to the provisions set forth in Attachment A of this order.
 - c. In all cases where shell casings are recovered, members shall take overall, mid-range, and close-up photographs of each item prior to packaging.
 - 5. Buccal Swabs
 - a. Only members trained to swab for DNA shall collect buccal swabs.
 - b. Trained MPD members shall only collect buccal swabs according to the provisions set forth in Attachment A of this order.
- 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 under the Investigative Services column of 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.
 - b. Separately documenting each item with the required information (e.g., CSID 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, containing the following information:

- a. Documentation of the location of the scene, time of notification or dispatch, time of arrival, and time of departure; and
 - b. Assessment of the existing physical evidence (e.g., latent fingerprints, photographs, shell casings, and buccal swabs).
- E. Submission of Evidence for Forensic Analysis
1. Forensic testing and analysis for all offenses investigated by the Department shall be conducted by DFS.
 2. Members shall attach a DFS Evidence Submission Form to all forensic testing and analysis requests.

III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Supervisors shall be responsible for ensuring that:
1. All PD Forms 668 and 698 are reviewed and signed.
 2. The PD Form 307 contains the latent fingerprint lift backing cards reflected on the reports.
 3. All completed and approved PD Forms 307 are documented in the evidence database and transferred to the Latent Fingerprint Examination Section.
 4. Only trained members process scenes and collect evidence as outlined in this order.
 5. All scenes are properly processed according to the provisions set forth in Attachment A.
- B. Element property officers shall be responsible for:
1. Ensuring that evidence is properly packaged, labeled and submitted to DFS, or the Evidence Control Branch, as appropriate. All items shall be:
 - a. Properly documented with the required information (e.g., CSES number, date, address, offense type);
 - b. Securely sealed;
 - c. Documented in the evidence database; and
 - d. Labeled with a barcode.
- C. Watch commanders shall be responsible for:

1. Knowing which members are trained to recover fingerprints, collect shell casings, and collect buccal swabs.
 2. Ensuring that trained members are appropriately deployed.
 3. Ensuring that scenes are properly processed according to the provisions set forth in Attachment A.
- D. Patrol district commanders shall:
1. Designate a district crime scene search coordinator at the rank of sergeant or above to facilitate the collection and forwarding of reports to DFS and act as a liaison between the district and DFS.
 2. Ensure that there are an adequate number of trained members to recover fingerprints, shell casings, and buccal swabs.
- E. The Metropolitan Police Academy commanding official shall ensure that:
1. Training records of all members certified to process crime scenes are maintained.
 2. A refresher course is conducted each calendar year for all trained members.
 3. The assignment of physical evidence collection kits are assigned to newly trained members and electronically tracked.
 4. An updated list of certified members is provided to:
 - a. Office of the Chief Technology Officer for publication on the MPD intranet home page;
 - b. MPD members assigned to DFS; and
 - c. Respective element commanders.
- F. District crime scene coordinators shall be responsible for:
1. Coordinating with the Equipment and Supplies Branch to ensure the proper control, replacement, and inspection of issued supplies and equipment.
 2. Ensuring that all separating (e.g., retiring, transferring) members check-out and return all assigned equipment related to their duties.
- G. The Equipment and Supplies Branch commanding official shall ensure that physical evidence collection replacement supplies are maintained and available to district crime scene coordinators.

IV. DEFINITIONS

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

	Term	Definition
1.	Axon Capture	Application that enables the documentation of incidents and crime scenes by members equipped with a body-worn camera (BWC) and a Department-issued cell phone.
2.	Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS)	Agency that has legislatively mandated responsibility for crime scene processing within the District of Columbia.
3.	Serious physical injury	Injury that results in hospitalization and that creates a substantial risk of death, serious disfigurement, disability, or protracted loss or impairment of the functioning of any body part or organ.
4.	Trained members	Sworn officers who are 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



Peter Newsham
Chief of Police

PN:KDO:MOC:SMM

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