
CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION-A HOLISTIC VIEW

Physical evidence has potential to play a critical role. Approach should be objective, thorough and thoughtful. Recognize and preserve physical evidence. It is the only opportunity to recover and preserve physical evidence. Case information is obtained by statements from witnesses and suspects. Physical clues initially though irrelevant may become crucial to successful resolution of the case. During crime scene investigation one must follow fundamental principles of investigation. Variations can be depending upon local facilities

Crime scene personnel must have basic training, update their knowledge and must develop skills and abilities by advanced training. For potentially devastating situations as biological weapons, radiological or chemical threats, fire and arson, bomb and explosions, electronic crime investigations need special care and advice.

Investigation of death is very important and need special attention and training. Protection of crime scene is very important for the investigation of crime scene.

It is important for initial responding officers (when we dial 100) to be observant when entering the crime scene. The person who has informed first must be guided not to re-enter the crime scene and prevent others also from entering the crime scene. If additional force is required to maintain scene integrity must be requested to higher officials. It is the foremost duty to preserve the scene with minimal contamination and disturbance of physical evidence. The scene should be treated as a crime scene. One should promptly and cautiously enter crime scene without disturbing and distorting the evidence. One common entry path should be earmarked after prior examination for evidence. Crime scene protection is very important. We should look for the material which can provide a link between the victim, the suspect and the crime scene.

Observe persons, vehicles events, potential evidence and environmental conditions. Safety and well being of officers and other individuals should be first priority. Identify and control any dangerous situations or persons. Control of physical threats will ensure safety of officers and others present.

Such initial responding officers can work in a better manner if they have with them following items e.g. consent/search forms, crime scene barricade tape, first-aid kit, flares, flashlight and extra batteries, paper bags, personal protective equipment (PPE). These items should be in police vehicles or readily available to initial responding officer. Other items like audiotape recorder, camera with flash and extra film, chalk, directional marker/compass, disinfectant, maps, plastic bags, pocket knife, reflective vest, tape measure, tarps to protect evidence from the, weather, traffic cones, waterless hand wash with germicide and wireless phone.

Medical attention is provided to the injured persons with minimal contamination of the scene. Assisting, guiding about need to preserve and secure evidence. Instructing medical personnel during care and removal will diminish risk of contamination and loss of evidence. If injuries are incompatible with life emergency personnel should not be allowed to enter. Identify persons at the crime scene and control their movements. Controlling persons at crime scene is essential in maintaining scene integrity, safeguarding evidence and minimizing contamination. This is very difficult job but one should be tactful and courteous. A log book can be put and ask everybody entering crime scene to register his name, fingerprints and shoe prints to rule out contamination

Boundaries should be identified and secured. This can be done with a tape, rope, branches of a tree or vehicles present there. One should remember that boundaries can be reduced in size if necessary but cannot be easily expanded. All observations must be documented at the earliest possible to preserve information.

When the investigating officer arrives turn over control of scene and brief investigating officer in charge. Briefing the investigator taking charge helps further investigative responsibilities. Initial responding

officer will provide a detail report to the investigating officer when he arrives.

Investigating officer after arrival at the crime scene will conduct scene assessment. Assessment of investigator determines type of incident and level of investigation. He will identify specific responsibilities, share preliminary information and develop investigative plans. Written and photographic documentation provides a permanent record.

Identify valuable and fragile evidence by systematic examination and documentation of scene. In crimes against the persons these may be in the form of blood, semen, saliva, hair, tissue and fibres. In crimes against property these may be in the form of glass, paint, tool marks or accelerants.

Problems are complicated due to minute amounts of material and complexities of the matrix in which the materials are found. We should do our best with these trace evidences as results should be beyond any reasonable doubt.

Search should always be in such a manner that no area is left without search. It may be done strip wise, grid wise, zone wise or in a spiral manner. Determine composition of team that which type of experts are required for that particular crime scene. Prioritize collection of evidence, preserving, packing and transport evidence. Minimize contamination by being safe, clean and careful to ensure the welfare of personnel and integrity of evidence. A well documented scene ensures the integrity of the investigation and provides a permanent record for later evaluation. Documentation can be done by notes, sketches or by photography and audio-video recording.

Appropriately packaged, labeled and maintained in a secure, temporary manner until final packaging and submission to FSL. Continuity in the chain of custody is essential

Final survey of crime scene should always be done. Performing final survey of crime scene allows investigating officer and other responders to share information. It is the best opportunity for investigating officer and other responders to ensure that crime scene investigation is complete.

After the investigation is complete reports and other documentation should be compiled into a case file.

It is essential for the investigating officer to possess the following additional items other than initial investigating officers for successful investigation e.g. the crime biohazard bags, body fluid collection kit, casting materials, cutting instruments (knives, box cutter, scalpel, scissors), evidence collection containers, evidence identifiers, evidence seals/tape, high-intensity lights, latent print kit, magnifying glass, measuring devices, permanent markers, photographic scale (ruler), presumptive blood test supplies, sketch paper, tool kit, tweezers/forceps. Other helpful items are bloodstain pattern examination kit, business cards, chemical enhancement supplies, entomology (insect) collection kit, extension cords, forensic light source (alternate light source, UV lamp/laser, goggles), gunshot residue kit, laser trajectory kit, maps, marking paint/snow wax, metal detector, mirror, phone listing (important numbers), privacy screens, protrusion rod set, sexual assault evidence collection kit (victim and suspect), shoe print lifting equipment, thermometer, video recorder.

In addition to it there are specific evidence collection kits like Blood collection, Blood stain pattern documentation, Fingerprint Impression and excavation Tool marks, Trace evidence collection, trajectory and Pattern print lifter kits.

A great emphasis should be laid on proper training of police officials. There should be specific policies concerning crime scene investigations. There is great need for strengthening of resources of police stations. In these investigations when the impossible has been eliminated, what so ever will remain, however improbable, will be the truth."

Moreover there should be zeal to solve the crime. I have no hesitation in concluding that if investigator has the highest integrity along with training and resources then justice is done at crime scene only.

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