

Oakland County Sheriff's Office
General Order # 4.8



SUBJECT: Crime Scene Processing		NUMBER: 4.8
EFFECTIVE DATE: 8/29/2023 REVIEW DATE: Annually		MACP Standard Impact: 4.2.1, 4.2.2 and 4.2.3
REPLACES AND RESCINDS: Policy and Procedure 82	DISTRIBUTION: All Personnel	NUMBER OF PAGES: 7

This order replaces and rescinds all previously issued orders, procedures, rules and regulations, notices and/or practices in conflict with this General Order.

I. PURPOSE

To outline procedures for the safeguarding, identification, collection and preservation of evidence at crime scenes to ensure a proper chain of evidence for courtroom presentation.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office to thoroughly investigate crimes and successfully prosecute criminal offenders. In order to effectively use available laboratory support services, physical evidence must be identified, collected, preserved and transmitted to a laboratory without delay. Accordingly, it is the policy of the Oakland County Sheriff's Office to diligently follow forensic methods when obtaining and protecting evidence.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. Evidence - That which can be collected or preserved for examination or exhibit that will aid or assist in establishing a fact.
- B. Collection - How evidence is gathered, marked or preserved for later use or examination.
- C. Preserve - The handling of items of evidence to avoid contamination.
- D. Chain of Evidence – A process that tracks the movement of evidence through its collection, safeguarding and analysis lifecycle by documenting each person who handled the evidence, the date/time it is collected or transferred and the purpose for the transfer.
- E. Crime Scene – The scene of a serious crime that would invoke the provisions of this General Order.
- F. Oakland County Forensic Science Laboratory – The primary forensic lab utilized by the Oakland County Sheriff's Office.
- G. Specialty Personnel – Sheriff's Office personnel who hold a level of education, training and experience that would qualify them in the investigation, documentation and processing of evidence, crime scenes or serious injury/fatal crashes. **(MACP Standard 4.2.1)**

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IV. PROCEDURES

A. Arrival at the Crime Scene

1. Primary responsibility for the protection and preservation of a crime scene lies with the first arriving deputy. They will assess the need for additional assistance of law enforcement, fire or medical personnel and take reasonable steps to protect the scene without hampering the requirements of safety or first-aid considerations. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 b)**
2. A crime scene must be secured as soon as possible to prevent the loss of evidence. It is the first deputy's responsibility to secure, protect and preserve the scene and all items of evidence from all non-essential personnel (and others) to prevent the contamination of the scene or the loss of evidence. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 b)**
3. It is the responsibility of the first arriving deputy (until delegated) to document those present at the crime scene.
4. The arriving deputy should decide if additional or specialty personnel are needed to properly process and document the scene and should contact the on-duty supervisor to make such request. This determination should be based upon the seriousness or type of crime/incident and the training and skill level of the deputies at the scene. Incidents like Criminal Sexual Conduct, Homicide/Suspicious Death, Fatal Crashes, Arson and Home Invasion shall almost always require the use of Specialty Personnel (e.g.: Evidence Technician, Crash Investigator).
5. This agency will have the following specialty personnel available at all times, either on-duty or available for call-out: **(MACP Standard 4.2.1)**
 - a. Crime Scene Evidence Technicians (personnel having advanced training and experience in the collection, documentation, and preservation of evidence)
 - b. Crash Investigators (personnel having advanced training and experience in serious and fatal crash investigation)
 - c. Detectives

B. Call-Out Procedure - Crime Scene Evidence Technician

1. Deputies throughout the Sheriff's Office have been trained and equipped as Evidence Technicians for the purpose of processing crime scenes and assisting the Oakland County Sheriff's Office Forensic Laboratory staff in the processing of scenes. If no Evidence Technician is on duty, or the complexity of the crime scene requires staff with more specialized training, or specialized equipment is necessary to properly process the scene, the following procedure will be followed:
 - a. Prior to the Officer-in-Charge (OIC) requesting that the lab respond to a scene, the OIC shall contact the Emergency Operations Center Command Sergeant, an on-duty Patrol Sergeant or Detective Sergeant. The Sergeant shall assess the situation and make the determination for call-out of the Forensic Science Laboratory.
 - b. Requests from outside agencies will come through the Emergency Communication and Operations Center. The on-duty Command Sergeant shall assess the situation and make a determination for call-out of the Forensic Science Lab personnel.
 - c. The Emergency Operations Center Command Sergeant shall notify the Duty Captain of all call-outs and log same in the Major Incident Pass On.

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- d. Upon approval of the Sergeant, the OIC shall contact the Emergency Operation Center to request the lab and the on-call/on-duty Specialist(s). The OIC shall provide the Emergency Operation Center with basic information known at the time such as the nature of the crime or scene, whether there are multiple locations (i.e., victims at hospitals, actual scene(s), etc.) and each location as known. The OIC shall further advise of any exigent circumstances such as deteriorating evidence, public areas that are not able to be secured, etc.
- e. The Emergency Operations Center shall contact the on-call/on-duty Specialist with the request and provide the Specialist with the known information and the complaint number. If further information is needed, the Specialist shall directly contact the OIC or deputies at the scene(s) via radio or by telephone. The on-call/on-duty Specialist shall provide the Emergency Operations Center with an estimated time of arrival.
- f. Requests for the lab received at the Emergency Operations Center from departments other than the Oakland County Sheriff's Office shall be immediately forwarded to the on-call/on-duty Specialist and shall be handled according to this directive.
- g. Prior to requesting the lab to respond to a scene, the OIC and Sergeant shall assess each situation on its merit and consider the following:
 - i. The nature of the scene/crime
 - ii. The portability of the possible evidence for transport by the Deputy to the lab for later processing
 - iii. The possibility of Deputies using substation-assigned equipment, such as cameras and print kits, to process and preserve evidence
 - iv. The value of the actual or potential evidence to the scene/crime
 - v. The actual probability of usable evidence at the scene/crime

C. Call-Out Procedure – Crash Investigation:

- 1. The Emergency and Operations Center Command Sergeant or on-duty Patrol Sergeant will determine the need for specialized crash investigation at the scene.
- 2. Upon approval of the Sergeant, the OIC shall contact the Emergency Operations Center to request the on-call/on-duty crash investigator. The OIC shall provide the Emergency Operations Center with basic information known at the time.
- 3. The Emergency Operations Center shall contact the on-call/on-duty crash investigator with the request and provide the crash investigator with the known information and the complaint number. If further information is needed, the crash investigator shall directly contact the OIC or deputies at the scene(s) via radio or by telephone. The on-call/on-duty crash investigator shall provide the Emergency Operations Center with an estimated time of arrival.

D. Call Out Procedure – Detective:

- 1. The Emergency and Operations Center Command Sergeant or on-duty supervisor will determine the need for a detective at the scene. If no detective is on duty, the on-call investigator will be contacted via Sheriff's Office-issued cell phone.

E. Collecting, Processing, and Preserving Physical Evidence in the Field:

- 1. Personnel assigned to process crime scenes will be trained in latent fingerprint recovery, photography and videography, crime scene sketching, collection and preservation of evidence (including DNA) and other forensic procedures. **(MACP Standard 4.2.1)**

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2. Personnel assigned to process crash scenes will be trained in accident investigation, photography, collection and preservation of evidence, forensic mapping (or other scene documentation techniques) and scene sketches. **(MACP Standard 4.2.1)**
3. When specialty personnel are called out to process a scene, other personnel at the scene should not disturb, touch or handle physical evidence unless a danger exists that the evidence will be lost or destroyed prior to the arrival of Investigators. Should such a situation arise, the initial responding deputy will mark, seal, tag and preserve the evidence. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 b,d)**
4. Forensic Science Laboratory personnel responding to a crime scene will be responsible for the following when applicable: **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 a,b,c,d)**
 - a. Conducting a search for, and identifying, physical evidence of relevance
 - b. Photographing the overall scene, then close-ups and item-by-item as needed
 - c. Videotaping when appropriate
 - d. Sketching the scene
 - e. Taking 3-D scans of the scene
 - f. Marking all items for identification
 - g. Measuring the scene and evidence
 - h. Collecting latent prints and elimination prints as necessary
 - i. Collecting the evidence in the appropriate manner
 - j. Transporting all evidence to be secured with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office Property Section
 - k. Collecting, or causing to be collected, DNA evidence and elimination DNA from appropriate persons.
 - l. Collecting, or causing to be collected, fingerprint evidence and elimination fingerprints from appropriate persons
5. The procedures used for the collection and preservation of all evidence will be in accordance with accepted investigative practices and training provided by the Oakland County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Lab staff related to collection, packaging, processing and storage procedures for all evidence and property. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 b,c,d)**
6. Processing the Crime Scene/Crash Scene/Evidence **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 a,b,c,d)**
 - a. All scenes shall be processed and documented according to current best practices as identified by the training of Oakland County Sheriff's Office personnel, including methods taught during Police Academy training, approved in-service training and crime and traffic scene investigation schools.
 - i. The progression of crime scene processing tasks is as follows: determine if evidence will be sent to the lab or be processed on scene; determine whether to process DNA (Swab) or process for latent prints; photograph and/or sketch; and mark, label and collect evidence, if applicable.
 - ii. Personnel should take extra precautions to document temporary evidence as quickly as possible so that it is not lost.
 - iii. All evidence collected will be marked, sealed, tagged and submitted to the evidence room as soon as possible but prior to the end of the submitting deputy's/detective's shift. This includes relevant report-writing. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2d, 4.3.1 a)**

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- iv. Electronic evidence stored on computers, PDAs, or other digital devices may be lost if tampered with or improperly collected. If electronic evidence needs to be collected, care must be taken to prevent tampering with the device. The Computer Crimes Unit may respond to assist with collection of the evidence or be consulted regarding the proper collection procedure.
 - b. Whenever possible, portable evidence that requires further processing (serology, chemical processing, etc.) shall be collected and processed at the Oakland County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Laboratory. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 c)**
 - c. Those involved in the collection of evidence shall maintain the chain of custody of each item at all times. For scenes with large quantities of evidence, a property custodian may be assigned to accept and track all evidence at the scene. **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 e)**
- 7. Crime Scene Photography and Videography
 - a. Photography of certain crime scenes, crashes and incidents of major importance will be the responsibility of the crash investigator or evidence technician. Where possible, the photographer will use Sheriff's Office-issued equipment. If a detective or accident investigation member is not required, the responding deputy may take photographs.
 - b. Video and photographs that become evidence may be entered into the departmental records management system or stored on electronic media and included with the case file.
 - c. No photos or video shall be retained on the deputy's personal device(s) or shared on social media or forwarded outside of the Records Management System without permission of the Sheriff or his/her designee.
- 8. Crime Scene Sketches **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 a)**
 - a. Crime scene sketches should contain the following information:
 - i. Dimensions
 - ii. Address, including floor or room number, if applicable
 - iii. Location of significant features of the scene, including the victim
 - iv. Date of the sketch
 - v. Name of person preparing the sketch
 - vi. Location of recovered items of physical evidence
 - vii. CFS number.
 - b. Generally, the investigator will make rough sketches and measurements which include sufficient information for drawing a final diagram if required. If available, a 3-D scan should be utilized for documenting all major crime scenes.
- 9. Scene Processing Considerations **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 c)**
 - a. Considerations when processing crime scenes include whether:
 - i. Patrol deputies, evidence technicians, specialty personnel or crash investigators should process the scene.
 - ii. A written consent to search or a warrant is required.
 - iii. Manpower and equipment needs are sufficient.
 - iv. The scene perimeter is appropriate.
 - v. A deputy is assigned to log information about persons entering and exiting a scene.

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- b. Patrol officers may process minor scenes without the use of specialty personnel, including:
 - i. Assaults—minor injury, with or without weapon use
 - ii. Recovered stolen automobiles, unless the Auto Theft Unit desires to process.
 - iii. Traffic crashes, including non-life-threatening injuries.
 - iv. Any other offense, at the discretion of an on-duty supervisor

10. Reporting

- a. Personnel assigned to process a crime or traffic scene will complete a detailed report, to at least include:
 - i. Date and time of arrival to the scene
 - ii. Scene location (address/intersection)
 - iii. Action taken at the scene, including any measurements and/or photographs/video taken
 - iv. Circumstances by which personnel came into possession of the items collected **(MACP Standard 4.2.2 e)**
 - v. Description of each evidentiary item collected
 - vi. Other significant information necessary to provide an accurate representation of the scene's events
 - vii. Case report number assigned to the investigation

11. Evidence Transfer of Custody – Field

- a. Evidence collected will be properly documented, marked/labeled, packaged, transported and retained in the custody of the assigned collecting deputy until secured in the property room, property lockers or the processing room.
- b. If a transfer of custody of any evidentiary item is required in the field, documentation will include: **(MACP Standard 4.2.2e)**
 - i. Name of the releasing or other person
 - ii. Name of the receiving deputy/detective or other person, including functional responsibility
 - iii. Date, time and location of transfer
 - iv. Reason for the transfer of custody.

F. Evidence Submission to the Forensic Laboratory

- 1. Evidence will be submitted to the Forensic Laboratory in a manner that preserves the chain of custody.
- 2. Deputies/Investigators requesting the transfer of evidence to a Forensic Laboratory will complete and submit the appropriate examination request form(s) to the Property/Evidence Clerk.
- 3. A Deputy/Investigator assigned to a scene/case will be responsible for requesting the laboratory analysis and submission of evidence to a Forensic Laboratory. **(MACP Standard 4.2.3a)**
- 4. The Property/Evidence Clerk will be responsible for transfer of the evidence to the lab, as well as the following:
 - a. Documenting the transfer in the chain of custody
 - b. Maintaining evidence in original packaging during submission to the laboratory **(MACP Standard 4.2.3b)**
 - c. Submitting the appropriate laboratory examination request forms

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- d. Documenting all submissions and receipts of evidence into the property system database to attest to the chain of custody **(MACP Standard 4.2.3 c)**
5. Laboratory results will be provided by the Forensic Laboratory in the form of a written report and submitted to the Records Management System for file management and notification to appropriate personnel. **(MACP Standard 4.2.3 d)**



ISSUED BY: Sheriff Michael J. Bouchard