

NIAGARA FALLS POLICE DEPARTMENT

GENERAL ORDER

EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/27/2013	SUBJECT: PROCESSING CRIME SCENES; EQUIPMENT; PHOTOGRAPHS	Number 333.00 (NYSLEAP O-51-1;O-51- 2;O-51-3)
RESCINDS: 04/15/2003		Number of pages 5

I. Policy:

- A. The Criminal Investigation Division of the Niagara Falls Police Department shall handle all criminal investigations (except those involving narcotics, gambling and other sensitive investigations handled by the Narcotics and Intelligence Division) and associated tasks such as collecting evidence, photography work and developing and processing fingerprints.
- B. Detectives and Crime Scene Unit personnel will be called in upon request of the CID Commander. The Shift Commander shall authorize notification of the CID Commander. The CID Commander shall authorize the call out of all necessary personnel after assessing the situation. The highest-ranking detective will assume control of all tasks related to the crime scene and/or investigation. He/she should work in conjunction with the Patrol Supervisor on location to ensure a coordinated effort is established.

II. Procedure:

- A. Preservation of the Scene:
 - 1. In all incidents where a major crime or incident has occurred, it is of critical importance that the crime scene be secured by the first responding officers.
 - 2. All police and civilian personnel that have no investigative interest in the incident shall not to be allowed access to the area.
 - 3. Upon arrival and determining seriousness of the situation, the first responding officer shall notify the Shift Supervisor who will respond and take command of the area until Detective personnel arrive.
- B. The first responding officer is responsible for the following:
 - 1. Rendering necessary aid;

2. Conducting a preliminary search of the scene for perpetrators and additional victims;
3. Securing the perimeter of the crime scene;
4. Making note of any readily apparent items of evidence to be brought to the attention of responding investigators;
5. Protecting the scene, including the exclusion of all persons who do not have an authorized role in investigating the incident;
6. Identifying all participants, including victims, witnesses and suspects; Informing the desk of circumstances and requesting necessary assistance;
7. Maintaining control over the scene, including documentation of the names, ranks, titles and missions of each person who enters the crime scene with the time he entered and left;
8. Documentation of his/her own observations and actions in a detailed police report which will be made part of the subsequent investigation.

Every precaution must be taken to preserve the scene in its original state.

C. Equipment :

1. The Detective(s) and Crime Scene Unit personnel called to a crime or accident scene shall respond to that scene without delay.
 - a. He/she shall bring with him/her all the necessary equipment required to accomplish his/her investigation, based upon the general descriptions made available to him/her beforehand, of the incident/crime scene's magnitude.
- D. Upon arrival of a CID Supervisor or other detective, control of the investigation and responsibility for the following will rest with them:
 1. Debriefing of previous responding officers;
 2. The notification of other agencies (e.g., Coroner's office and District Attorney's Office as required);
 3. The deployment of additional investigative resources, if needed;

4. The securing of appropriate authority to search the scene, including owner's consent or search warrant if required;
5. The arrangement of interviews of witnesses and the interview of suspects;
6. Preliminary survey of the crime or accident scene;
7. All subsequent follow-up tasks and reports.

E. Photographs:

1. The need for photographs and/or sketches will be determined by the Detective Supervisor or the investigating Detective.
2. A video recorder may be used to document a crime or accident scene prior to processing. If video is employed, no sound recording shall be used.
3. Crime Scene officers shall use the Veripic Digital Evidence Management System for digital documentation, security and tracking of crime scene photographs.
 - a. This software employs a multiple hashing algorithm and image authentication for secure tracking of photos.
 - b. The software provides an automated tracking system for each piece of digital evidence. Utilizing a time stamp within the software, the NFPD Crime Scene Unit shall store detailed information regarding when and how digital evidence is handled, demonstrating a strict chain of custody.
 - c. Access to the system is restricted to Crime Scene Unit personnel and the Niagara County District Attorney's office.
4. To ensure admissibility of photos in Court, the Crime Scene Unit Officer will ensure that:
 - a. He/she is able to testify that the photo represents a true and accurate representation of the scene at the time it was taken;
 - b. The photo is free of distortion and does not misrepresent the scene or object depicted;
 - c. The continuity of the photo from the time of its capture to the time of its Court presentation can be established.
4. He/she must able to testify to the following:

- a. The date and time the photo was taken and uploaded;
- b. Camera location and direction it was facing;
- c. That the image was not altered in any way.

F. Collection and Labeling of Evidence:

- 1. All members of the Niagara Falls Police Department will promptly mark for future identification and secure same against tampering all evidence that is obtained in connection with case.
- 2. All articles of evidence are to be handled using procedures per General Order 109.00, Evidence Control.

G. Transfer of Evidence:

- 1. A record will be made each time an officer is involved with the transfer of custody of physical evidence. This record will contain the name and/or case number, the person's name and title, who receives the evidence, the date and time, the name and location of the laboratory and any examinations performed if it applies. This documentation shall be entered in the NFPD Impact Computer System pursuant to General Order 109.00, Evidence Control.

H. Release of Crime Scene:

- 1. The Detective Supervisor or Detective in charge will be responsible for determining at what point in time a major crime scene may be returned to the custody of the owner or occupant.
- 2. If it is determined that the scene must be secured for investigative reasons, sufficient manpower shall be assigned to maintain adequate protection of the scene.
- 3. He/she shall notify Dispatch and Patrol Supervisors of the fact that the scene is being held and also notify them when it is released. The Detective supervisor or Detective in charge is responsible for determining when all other crime scenes will be returned to control of the owner or occupant.

I. Reports:

1. The Detectives and Crime Scene officers shall, following the completion of his/her crime scene responsibilities, return to the Department with any and all evidence he has collected.
2. Before securing from this duty, he/she shall properly enter all items of evidence, coordinate and properly package all evidence and deposit same in evidence lockers or secure areas in accordance with established procedures.
3. He/she should coordinate with the Patrol Supervisor and all other personnel the preparation of the initial investigative report and all associated supplement reports as needed to document the investigation or incident.