

Responsibilities of the Crime Scene Investigative Team

The recovery of physical evidence during investigation of crime scenes is one of the most important undertakings of contemporary law enforcement. Often, the tangible items of evidence and the descriptive information derived from crime scene investigations make the difference between success and failure when a case is brought to trial. With the expanded capabilities of modern forensic science, even more attention must be devoted at crime scenes to locating, recovering and documenting evidence that will be examined by experts in the crime laboratory and used in the furtherance of justice.

There are certain personnel duties and responsibilities which are necessary in almost any major search operation. Those enumerated below are ones which are typically crucial to insure that search efforts are conducted in an organized and methodical fashion. If possible, it is important to have one person assigned to each duty, although it is relatively common for one person to accomplish two or more duties. Major assignments, as well as corresponding general duties and responsibilities follow:

1. Team Leader

- ♦ Assume control- insure safety of personnel and security at the scene
- ♦ Conduct initial walk-through for purposes of making preliminary survey, evaluating potential evidence and preparing a narrative description
- ♦ Make appropriate assignments for team members
- ♦ Designate command post location and insure exchange of information between search and investigative personnel
- ♦ Insure that sufficient supplies and equipment are available (see supply list)
- ♦ Designate an individual to log everyone into the scene
- ♦ Release the scene after a final survey and inventory of evidence

2. Photographer & Photographic Log Recorder

- ♦ Photograph entire area before it is entered
- ♦ Photograph entire scene with overall, medium and close-up coverage, using measurement scale when appropriate
- ♦ Photograph major evidence items before they are moved; coordinate this effort with the Sketch Preparer, and Evidence Recorder/Custodian
- ♦ Prepare photographic log and photographic sketch

3. Sketch Preparer

- ♦ Diagram immediate area of scene and orient sketch with north
- ♦ Set forth on sketch major items of evidence and coordinate evidence nomenclature with Evidence Recorder/Custodian
- ♦ Indicate adjacent buildings, rooms, furniture and so forth, as needed
- ♦ Designate and label areas to be searched and advise Team Leader and all other search members of nomenclature for designated areas
- ♦ Take appropriate measurements and insure that floor plan is accurate and drawn to scale

4. Evidence Recorder/Custodian

- ♦ Prepare evidence recovery log
- ♦ Coordinate evidence nomenclature with Sketch Preparer
- ♦ Receive and record all evidence
- ♦ Maintain custody and control of evidence
- ♦ Coordinate transmittal of evidence to crime laboratory
- ♦ Prepare narrative description of the scene

5. Director of Crime Laboratory

- ◆ Work in conjunction with crime scene team leader to insure sufficient supplies and equipment for testing
- ◆ Review testing with other team members to insure their understanding of the tasks to be performed
- ◆ Designate individual to record initial results and comparisons
- ◆ Review statistical analysis with other team members to insure their understanding
- ◆ Insure laboratory safety of all team members