



**CHEVY CHASE
VILLAGE
POLICE
DEPARTMENT**

GENERAL ORDER: 5-26; EVIDENCE COLLECTION

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Police Chief: John Fitzgerald

I. POLICY

The proper collection, documentation, preservation, and submission of physical evidence to forensic laboratories may provide key ingredients to an investigation. The crime scene is usually the starting point of any investigation. The success of the investigation depends heavily on the initial observations and actions of the first officer on the scene. The circumstances of a particular case will govern the actions taken by the officer to protect and preserve the crime scene to ensure that legal and scientific requirements can be satisfied. Actions taken by the first officer on the scene are perhaps the most important because without a properly handled crime scene (the victim may be the crime scene), evidence may be inadmissible in court.

II. CRIME SCENE PROTECTION

The nature and extent to which a crime scene is protected must be determined on a case-by-case basis. The preservation of the crime scene allows the patrol officer or an evidence technician an opportunity to collect the evidence. The following guidelines are for the first officer on the scene, depending on the nature and size of the crime scene:

- A. Secure and protect the crime scene. This may be accomplished by cordoning off the area with yellow "Police Line – Do Not Cross" vinyl tape. Observe all conditions, events, remarks.
- B. Secure building entrances/exits; utilize additional officers, if needed.
- C. Locate witnesses, identify them, and separate them from each other until an investigator arrives or the scene is secure and their statements can be obtained. Interview complainants and witnesses.
- D. Determine which agency (CCVPD patrol; MCPD investigators) will have primary investigative authority. If MCPD, have ECC make contact with the appropriate unit to coordinate with them; seek guidance from them before interviewing any suspects. Yield responsibility for the investigation to the criminal investigators upon their arrival and continue to assist as necessary.
- E. Determine the need for an evidence/crime scene technician, and contact either a shift ID trained officer or the MCPD Forensic Sciences Unit as

appropriate.

- 1. On selected crime scenes, the MCPD evidence technician will collect and record all evidence from the crime scene and will be responsible for transporting the evidence to the appropriate laboratory for examination.
- 2. Even on scenes which are the responsibility of CCVPD officers, the MCP Forensic Services Section/Crime Scene Unit may be appropriate for the more involved scenes that are beyond the capabilities and resources of Village officers. In such circumstances, officers will contact the Crime Scene Unit by phone [REDACTED] and fully explain the situation. If a telephone is not available, or the Crime Scene Unit does not answer their telephone, make the request through E.C.C.

- F. Cover areas/items affected by weather elements.
- G. If the suspect is still on the scene and a lawful arrest can be made, make the arrest to prevent the suspect from tampering with, disposing, or destroying evidence.
- H. Prevent persons from unnecessarily walking around, through or in the scene, particularly in areas likely to contain physical evidence such as footprints, tire marks, shoe impressions, blood, bullet casings, etc.
- I. Maintain an access log that identifies all persons, including officers, supervisors, etc. entering and leaving the crime scene along with the time of entry and exit. Only persons directly involved with the investigation will be allowed into the crime scene.

III. EVIDENCE COLLECTION

- A. The officer who intends to use the evidence during a trial must be able to prove to the court that the evidence was collected, processed, and preserved properly. The officer must be able to identify each piece of evidence at trial as well as show its relevance to the case including the documented transfer of custody of physical evidence while in the field.
- B. Officers shall either photograph or sketch the crime scene prior to the collection of evidence to document where it was found.

- C. Officers will place evidence in appropriate containers and will complete the information on any labels prior to the submission to the Evidence Custodian.
- D. If a container holds a piece of evidence that is a biological hazard, i.e., body fluids, blood, etc., or needs refrigeration, the submitting officer will so indicate conspicuously on the container.

IV. EVIDENCE PROCESSING

- A. A Village officer who processes a crime scene will submit a detailed record of all the events that transpire at a crime scene. If a Montgomery County police officer processes a crime scene, the Village officer's report will detail his/her participation in the process. A Montgomery County police officer who processes a crime scene in the Village will submit reports in accordance with MCP policies.
- B. To ensure that evidence is handled properly after it has been collected, methods must be employed that will preserve the condition of evidence in the process of collection, prevent the introduction of foreign materials to it, and ensure as complete a sample as possible.
- C. Clothing that is wet or bloody must be "air-dried" and packaged in **paper bags** unless impractical.
- D. Biological fluids need to be frozen.
- E. It shall be the primary officer's (officer handling the case) responsibility for requesting lab examinations, unless relieved of that responsibility by an investigator, or Forensic Services Section technician. The primary officer should contact the lab technicians to ensure that the requested exams can be performed and if the particular exam is appropriate for the circumstances.
- F. Evidence that is to be submitted to the Montgomery County Crime Lab for examination shall be submitted via the 2nd District Station in accord with MCPD's evidence submission procedure.

This directive voids the previous version dated 10/26/2009.