

CRIME SCENE

INTRODUCTION:

This scenario is designed to provide the explorers with the basic principles concerning responding to a crime scene assess the crime scene, secure the scene and locating evidence. This scenario training manual is not all inclusive, but does suggest some specific techniques that should be used, although other methods can be just as equally effective. The focus of this training manual is to provide principles that are flexible and adaptable for the crime scene scenarios. Following the basic principles in this manual should allow the law enforcement explorer to successfully handle these law enforcement competition scenarios safely and professionally.

TYPICAL SCENARIO:

Team will be dispatched to respond to a potential crime scene. Team will act as “patrol” officers. Team objectives may include: to work as a team to safely search the location, make arrests as necessary, locate all evidence of the crime and may require photographing scene.

TIME:

A typical crime scene search scenario is completed within an average of 15 minutes, depending on the scenario, number of rooms, room sizes, witnesses, complainants, victims and suspects. The maximum time limit is 20 minutes.

ORGANIZATION:

An explorer team is usually comprised of four (4) explorers, with one member being the primary officer. This should be established prior to arriving at the scenario pre-briefing. The primary officer will be the one who will delegate responsibilities to the other members of the team and act as the “leader” throughout the scenario.

TEAMWORK:

The explorer team will need to show they are working together and that everyone is contributing to the team. Team members should show they are giving suggestions or their recommendations on how to accomplish tasks to their team leader to make the final decision.

WEAPON SAFETY SKILLS:

When searching any room or layout, explorers should have their firearms pointed out toward the direction they are searching/looking called “high-ready” position. This is to ensure they can engage the suspect if they come out at them. Another safe direction is keeping the firearm in a “low ready” position, but not pointed at the ground. At all times, the explorer must keep their trigger finger off the trigger but indexed along the side of the firearm. Explorers should avoid all crossfire situations or “lasering” situations (the act of pointing your firearm muzzle at one of your teammates) as this can be points deducted especially if an explorer shoots one of their own teammates.

BRIEFING:

The dispatch/judge will brief the primary officer of the nature of the call. In responding to a potential crime scene, you will receive pertinent information regarding the incident from the dispatch. This will identify the nature and location of the alleged crime, as well as the complainant’s name and relationship to the crime scene location. Dispatch may also inform you if someone is injured. The primary officer can ask key questions that will help you assess the situation adequately:

- What is the location?
- Are any weapons involved?
- Has the complainant indicated the suspect’s location?
- How many individuals are involved?
- How many officers are necessary to safely contain or control the situation?
- Do you need additional services?
- Are any special concerns or dangers associated with the call?

ARRIVAL:

Team leader should advise dispatch/judge they are on scene or in the area.

APPROACH:

The explorer team should utilize some type of safe “tactical” style approach to the scene. The explorer team should be ready to make entry into the location, without compromising their team, such as standing in front of glass windows/doors, where they can be readily seen by the occupants inside.

ENTRY:

Typically the team will enter the structure in a smooth orderly entry if there is an open door, announcing “POLICE/SHERIFF’S DEPARTMENT” or your agency name. If the door is closed then the team will try to attempt contact with the premise owner to gain entry into premise. Team members will do a “safety sweep” of all areas where a human body can hide, as quickly and safely as possible. Team members need to ensure they do not stop in the “fatal funnel” of doorways, but keep moving forward until all rooms are cleared using a tactically safe method. Explorers should exercise due care and caution not to destroy or damage any potential evidence. **For example, stepping in blood, picking up the firearm without gloves on, touching evidence or areas that need to be fingerprinted.**

WHEN SCENE IS CLEARED:

Identify People on the Scene

At the scene of an incident, you must identify all parties involved, including complainants, victims, suspects, and witnesses. A complainant is a person who alleges that a crime has been committed or can be the person who calls the police. A victim is a person harmed by a crime. A suspect is a person believed to have committed a crime or offense. A witness is a person who sees, knows, or vouches for something and may make a sworn statement about that information. The same person can belong to more than one category. For example, the victim may also be the complainant, or a person initially identified as a witness may become a suspect as the investigation progresses.

Separate Involved Parties

It is extremely important to keep victims, complainants, and witnesses separated in a criminal investigation. Do not allow the involved parties to talk to each other. Blocking such communication prevents them from discussing the incident and coordinating their accounts of what happened. Place them in separate locations, near the crime scene area but in a place that poses no risk of contaminating evidence. Preferably, place them far enough apart so that they cannot hear or see each other. If separate rooms are not available, involved parties can be isolated within one large room

Separating involved parties will help each of them focus on what they saw or heard, better maintaining the integrity of their statements. Multiple witnesses who have viewed or experienced the same event never recall the same details. A witness overhearing another person describe the same event may be tempted, even unconsciously, to reiterate the other witness' version of the crime. Working together, they may come up with accounts that differ from the facts.

Remember that if suspect(s) are being questioned in relation to the offense of crime they will need to have their Miranda Warning (rights) read to them. Explorers should always confirm that the suspect understood their rights by having them sign the Miranda Warning card.

Injured People

When there are injured people at the scene, responding explorers have additional responsibilities such as providing first aid. If the victim does not require immediate first aid, ask direct, fundamental questions about how the victim sustained the injury, such as the following:

- Who hit you?
- What did the suspect use to hit you?
- When were you hit?
- Where were you hit?
- Where were you standing when being hit?
- How were you hit?
- Why were you hit?

View the victim's injuries and record detailed observations in the field notes, keeping in mind that you will use these notes to create reports and refresh your recollection when testifying. Note whether the information the victim provides appears to be consistent with the injuries and evidence at the scene.

Secure the Crime Scene

After finding the incident's location, address officer safety concerns and any victim or witness injuries, and secure the potential crime scene(s). Look for sources of information about, and evidence of, the crime when securing a crime scene. The size of the crime scene depends on the type of crime, the type of evidence, and the location of the evidence. Use personal observations and statements from victims and witnesses to assist in determining the extent of a crime scene. Crime scene perimeters should be larger rather than smaller. It is easier to reduce the size of a perimeter than to enlarge it. A larger crime scene also helps keep crowds away from the evidence.

Attempt to locate and identify the point of the suspect's entry to and exit from the crime scene by visually inspecting the scene. Evidence of entry or exit might include broken glass or pry marks around doorways. Identify the pieces of evidence furthest from the center of the crime scene. Once a survey of the area is completed, a supervisor or investigator assigned to the case may decide to adjust the original boundaries or perimeter of the crime scene, based on the size and the type of structure or property they are searching.

Establish boundaries for the crime scene and guard against unnecessary entrance by cordoning off the area with crime scene tape.

Protect the Crime Scene

Once the crime scene perimeter is established, do not allow any unauthorized removal or alteration of any evidence. Alert officers will help protect the scene and the evidence it contains from unnecessary intrusion or handling. Always be aware of potential threats to the crime scene area. Curious unauthorized people can damage, contaminate, or destroy evidence at a scene. Do not allow them to enter the secured crime scene area. Officer safety is at risk by the entry of unauthorized people into a scene. Prevent intrusion by anyone who approaches the crime scene perimeter by using verbal commands and directions to enforce the perimeter. Instruct people to move behind the crime scene tape, advising that refusal may result in arrest. You have the authority to arrest any individual who, after receiving a warning, crosses an area marked by crime scene tape.

The primary officer will designate one point of entry and exit for the crime scene, and will assign an officer to maintain a crime scene log at that location. If the primary officer designates more than one point of entry or exit, he or she will assign an officer to each location and notify all explorers to use the access point(s).

Officers not assigned to the crime scene do not have access just because they are law enforcement officers. The officer posted at the access point must document these

Details in the crime scene log:

- The name, rank, and agency of each person entering or leaving the scene
- The date and time of the person's entry or exit
- The reason the person was at the scene.

The crime scene log provides proof of security and validates the evidence collected at a crime scene

CRIME SCENE OBSERVATION AND LOCATING EVIDENCE:

The explorers should observe the crime scene and locate evidence that proves or disproves the case. The explorers should place evidence markers at or near all evidence if possible. The explorers should note where areas of trace evidence, fingerprints can possibly be located.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

If any evidence of the crime is located, one explorer of the team should be assigned to the photographing and documenting the location of all evidence. The photographs are taken starting from distance working into a very close picture with a ruler or other scale object along with several photos taken from different angles. Once all photos are taken, the camera will need to be turned over to the judge for review.

ENDING SCENERIO:

The primary explorer when done will inform the judge they are ready to debrief. They should inform the judge the following information.

- where the incident occurred
- how the incident occurred
- names and descriptions of victims, witnesses, and possible suspects
- all evidence Identified
- description of the suspect's vehicle, if applicable and if known
- special concerns on the scene such as biohazards, a hostile crowd, at-large suspects, and severe injuries
- how the scene is being handled and protected
- the scene's boundaries and protection measures
- Brief description of what the primary explorer feels occurred

DEDUCTIONS:

Loss of points can be obtained by unjustified discharge of weapons, unnecessary roughness of the suspect(s), explorer killed by suspect(s) or explorers, or damaging or missing key evidence.