

RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

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Chief of Police: Michael Poehlman /s/		
Approving Deputy Chief:		
General Order No: D-110-04	Issued: September 16, 2004	Supersedes: 3/210.000, 3/210.100, 3/219.000
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General Order Title: CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION		

POLICY

The actions taken by officers initially responding to the scene of a crime often determine the outcome of the investigation. These actions include a proper response, apprehension of suspects, care of injured victims and the protection and collection of evidence. To this end, the department maintains procedures which ensure a coordinated and effective investigative process.

CRIME SCENE PROCEDURES

Response to the Crime Scene

Unless performing a supervisory function, officers will respond to the scene of a crime only when specifically dispatched by Communications personnel or other competent authority.

Approach to the Crime Scene

Officers will approach the scene of a crime in a manner that will not jeopardize the safety and well being of the public and that will minimize contamination of the crime scene.

Medical Aid to Victim(s)

A severely injured victim requiring immediate medical attention will take precedence over other duties. The officer's first responsibility is to the victim, even though it may give the suspect a chance to escape and/or destroy evidence. Upon determining that the victim needs emergency medical treatment the officer will:

- Notify Communications an ambulance is needed;
- Render necessary emergency first aid at the scene based on the officer's training, abilities and knowledge;
- If life saving measures are commenced, the officer will continue such measures until relieved or until death is pronounced by competent authority;
- If possible, the officer will direct medical personnel into the area in such a manner so as not to alter or destroy items of evidentiary value;
- Document actions taken by medical personnel including objects moved, areas traversed, and evidentiary items altered or destroyed (e.g., footprints, bloodstains, drag marks, bullet holes in clothing, etc.)

If the victim is to be transported by ambulance, an officer will, according to the severity of the crime and the injuries involved, accompany the victim and note statements or declarations made.

Dying Declarations

If the victim, witness or suspect is still alive but death appears imminent, officers should attempt to elicit a statement. This statement may later prove invaluable in firmly establishing whether or not a crime occurred or in investigating circumstances surrounding the crime. A dying declaration is extremely important because it is one of the few types of hearsay evidence that may be introduced at a trial. The elements of a dying declaration are substantially as follows:

- The victim must believe that he is going to die and that there is no hope of recovery. It is not essential that the declarant be informed by the doctor or by the officers that there is no hope of recovery, only that his actions and speech indicate that belief;
- The dying statement must refer to the manner and circumstances which brought about his present condition and ultimate death;
- The declarant must die;
- The statement may be used only in a criminal trial for establishing the felonious causing of the declarant's death.

It is recommended that the declaration be written and signed by the victim, but this is not essential. No oath has to be administered, nor is it necessary that witnesses be present. The use of a tape recorder is an acceptable and preferred method of recording a subject's dying declaration and should be utilized whenever possible.

Dead on Arrival in the Emergency Room

The below listed procedures will be followed when handling those persons who are dead on arrival at a hospital as a result of a crime or suspected foul play:

- Emergency room personnel should not be allowed to wash blood, dirt, or material off the individual;

- No blood, urine, or body fluids will be removed in the emergency room for toxicological purposes;
- If the Coroner has not been notified, the officer assigned to the case will make such notification;
- Upon arrival at the emergency room, the Coroner will assume custody of the body. Prior to the body's removal, the officer assigned will consult with the Coroner and verify that such custody has been assumed. This verification will be noted in the officer's report.

Field Death Decisions

Criteria to Determine Death

No officer will declare death to have occurred nor withhold resuscitation efforts unless death is obvious based on the presence of rigor mortis in the non-hypothermic victim, post-mortem lividity, decomposition, undeniable lethal trauma or other comparable circumstances. If these death conditions are not present, then emergency medical services will be requested. Appropriate resuscitative efforts should be made by on-scene police and fire personnel until relieved by EMS personnel. EMS personnel will assess the victim and determine whether or not resuscitative efforts will be made or continued.

Officers are cautioned that hypothermia and/or cold-water drowning victims may have every appearance of death, *i.e.*, no discernible heartbeat, no respiration, cold, cadaverous appearance, and/or rigor mortis. Even so, there have been successful resuscitations. In such instances, every reasonable effort to resuscitate and to obtain emergency medical assistance should be made.

The actions of EMS personnel are directed by the Washoe County District Board of Health and REMSA. Final pronouncement of death will normally be made by the appropriate medical authority, usually the hospital physician in contact with on-scene EMS personnel.

Notification Procedures

When an officer declares a victim dead, the officer will:

- Initiate crime-scene protection;
- Initiate notification of the field supervisor, commanding officer, detective, Coroner, and others as may be appropriate;
- If EMS personnel have not yet arrived, request via dispatch that they be cancelled because the victim has expired; and/or
- Advise arriving EMS personnel that the victim is dead, and for the purpose of crime-scene preservation, deny EMS personnel access to the scene.

Death Investigation Checklist

Protection of the scene and the collection of evidence is critical in a death investigation, especially homicide. It is the responsibility of the officer in charge to thoroughly investigate the incident until a determination of cause of death can be made. The department has established procedures for assisting officers in death investigations. The Death Investigation Checklist (appendix A) has been designed to aid personnel in the investigation of homicide, suicide, natural death, and accidental death. The Checklist is a guide for identifying areas that should be addressed in a report.

Jurisdiction Terminated Coroner Cases

After reviewing all the circumstances in the case, if the death appears to be the result of a medical problem as determined by all parties on scene, the Medical Examiner will attempt to contact the deceased person's physician to confirm that the physician is familiar with the deceased, and medical condition may have caused the death. The Medical Examiner will attempt to contact the physician through their answering service during non-business hours.

If the physician will sign the death certificate the Medical Examiner will deem the case "J.T." or jurisdiction terminated.

When the case is determined "J.T." by the Medical Examiner's Office, officers must obtain a Reno Police Department case number to give to the on scene Medical Examiner Investigator. Photos are not required. Officers will need to obtain the Medical Examiner's case number and have it logged into the call. Officers will clear the call "Coroner Jurisdiction Terminated" (CJT). The on-scene officer(s) do not need to complete a Tiburon report for CJT cases.

Supervisor's Responsibility involving Jurisdiction Terminated Coroner Cases

The on-scene supervisor will review the preliminary investigation conducted by the responding patrol officers and communicate any concerns to the medical examiner.

If the medical examiner concludes they are going to terminate jurisdiction, the on-scene supervisor will gather the information to generate a watch log entry. This entry should only include; the fact that the case was cleared CJT, time, location, the name of the decedent and date of birth, and the case number. No further details are required.

The Medical Examiner will continue to submit their deceased person's report, generated out of their office, to the Robbery Homicide Unit. A Robbery Homicide police assistant will generate a report with the decedent's information for purposes of data collection.

Tiburon Report

If any evidence exists that the death is the result of a crime or the investigating officer finds a lack of evidence to indicate the cause of death appears to be the result of a medical problem as outlined above, then Officers will proceed with the investigation and treat the death as if it were possibly related to criminal activity. The Investigating Officer will continue their investigation,

complete the necessary paperwork, or, if necessary, notify Detectives. If the Medical Examiner does not deem the case "J.T." or jurisdiction terminated, the officer will handle the case consistent with existing procedures.

Live Victims

The following are procedures to use when handling individuals who are alive when admitted to the emergency room and whose injuries are the result of a crime:

1. The officer will accompany the victim to the emergency room and remain in the background during emergency medical treatment.
2. The officer will take custody of clothing or evidence removed from the victim by emergency room personnel.
3. If possible, emergency room personnel should not deface any bullet holes, knife holes, or comparable items in the clothing.
4. If necessary, and possible, the investigating officer will obtain a statement from the victim; this is to be done with the concurrence, and at the convenience of, the treating physician.
5. If the victim dies in the emergency room, no tubes, IV's, or catheters will be removed from the body. No attempt will be made to clean the body before it is sent to the morgue.

Notification Procedures

When death is suspected to be the result of a crime the first officer on scene will notify the following personnel:

- Field supervisor – the field supervisor will notify detectives and others, based on call-out procedures covered in this General Order.
- Watch Commander – FIS should not be contacted if detectives are responding.

This notification procedure should follow current on-call schedules.

Officer's Responsibilities While Waiting for Detectives

Preserve the Crime Scene

The major task of officers preserving the crime scene is to prevent certain actions from taking place, specifically:

- Touching items or surfaces that are likely to yield latent fingerprints;
- Moving items or disturbing the bodies of deceased persons;
- Unnecessary walking in the area of the crime scene. Extreme care must be taken to avoid walking in areas likely to contain evidence, including foot or tire impressions;

- Using telephones within the crime scene for any reason, including required notifications.

Protect the Crime Scene

Immediate protection measures include:

- Separating witnesses and/or suspects;
- Keeping spectators from areas that may contain physical evidence;
- Protecting and covering critical evidence areas that can be affected by smoke, rain, snow, or direct sun;
- Establishing an entry control point to restrict entry to essential personnel, and securing all possible exits;
- Establishing command post outside crime scene;
- Establishing media area if necessary.

Record the Crime Scene

An effort must be made to observe details, particularly those that are subject to change. Written notes should be made detailing:

- Time of call;
- Time of arrival;
- Persons on scene at time of arrival. In arson and bomb cases, it is extremely important to ID or photograph as many spectators as possible;
- Names of victims, suspects, witnesses;
- Condition of doors, windows, and furniture;
- Lighting conditions, including position of light switches;
- Odors and other transient evidence (smoke, gas, perfume, water condensation, etc.);
- Signs of activity (meal preparation, cigarette in ashtray, ice in glass, etc.).

Search of the Crime Scene

A search of the crime scene without a warrant will only be performed under the following exigent circumstances:

- To determine if the suspect is still on scene;
- To determine if a victim is on scene and in need of assistance;
- When it can be reasonably assumed there may be an immediate threat to human life.

Plain view evidence discovered during the course of such a search may be seized; however, it is incumbent upon the officer to justify the reasonableness of his actions. If there is any doubt as to the legality of the search or the existence of an exigency, the investigating officer will wait until a search warrant is obtained (*Mincey v. Arizona*).

When all victims and suspects have been located and the scene is secure, no additional search may take place without a search warrant.

Crime Scene Attendance Form

All personnel entering the scene of a major crime will be recorded on a Crime Scene Attendance form. This form should be initiated as soon as practicable and maintained at the entry control point.

CALL-OUT PROCEDURES

The watch commander or a field supervisor will have the authority to call additional personnel to the crime scene. This includes detectives, the Coroner's Office, and the District Attorney's office. In the absence of a field supervisor, Coroner notification is the responsibility of the officer or detective in charge of the crime scene. Only properly qualified, on-shift uniformed personnel should be called to the scene to complete CSI tasks.

Coroner's Office

The Washoe County Coroner's office is responsible for conducting an investigation and should be called when circumstances indicate that a person has been killed, has committed suicide, or has died in a non-medically-attended situation. Their investigation is limited to determining:

- Identity of the deceased;
- Time of death;
- Cause of death;
- Origins of trace evidence found on the body; and
- Notification of next of kin.

District Attorney's Office

The District Attorney's On-Call Team may be notified when any of the following crimes occur:

- Murder or attempted murder;
- Manslaughter;
- Kidnap;
- Sexual assault with serious bodily harm;
- Assault where death may result;
- Serious injury vehicle collisions involving an intoxicated driver;
- Motor vehicle deaths;
- Other major cases with serious impact on the community.

Telephonic requests for information or legal advice to the on-call District Attorney may be made by the detective, FIS technician, or the field supervisor on scene. Other department members will clear such requests with their immediate supervisor.

Requests for District Attorney call-out to the scene of a major crime will be initiated by the

detective in charge or the field supervisor.

EVIDENCE COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Crime Scene Authority

The on-scene detective will be in charge of the crime scene investigation and will be consulted prior to initiating any crime scene process, including the gathering of evidence. In the absence of an assigned detective, the on-scene field supervisor will assume such authority.

Evidence Collection Responsibility

On-scene FIS personnel will have full responsibility for collecting, preserving, and photographing items of evidence. Accordingly, members of the department will only assist in the evidence collection process when so directed by FIS personnel. In the absence of assigned FIS personnel, the ranking field supervisor will assume such functional supervision.

Collection Methods for Different Types of Evidence

Certain types of evidence require special handling in order to retain their evidentiary value in court proceedings. For purposes of comparison with physical evidence collected at the crime scene, other materials and substances collected for submission to the laboratory must be from an identifiable source and clearly marked.

Firearms

Condition - Firearms or other weapons will not be touched before their exact location is recorded by photographs and/or sketches. Detailed notes will be taken on the condition of the weapon, and the position of the safety. Officers will not open the cylinder or breach, nor unload the weapon.

Handling - When moving a firearm, the officer should touch only the trigger guard and/or the knurled portion of the handle. A warning tag and/or note will be placed on the outside of the container holding a loaded firearm. Firearms can be unloaded when the condition of the weapon is not a primary factor. Care should be taken to document the number and placement of any bullets removed from the weapon. Loaded firearms will not be booked into evidence. FIS will be contacted to take custody of loaded weapons.

Identification - Identification of a weapon should include the brand, model, serial number and barrel length. Attach a tag or place inside an envelope for identification.

Fingerprints

The lifting of latent fingerprints or other methods of preserving fingerprints will be the responsibility of the officer assigned to perform this function. Items containing suspected

fingerprints which are not processed at the scene will be packaged to protect against friction and the package marked for identification.

Documents

A document requiring scientific examination will be enclosed, unfolded, in an envelope. Documents will be marked on the reverse side in a location that will not interfere with the evidentiary value of the document. No markings will be placed on documents to be processed for latent prints.

Cartridges/Fired Bullets

No markings will be placed on expended cartridges or bullets. These items will be placed in a sealed pillbox or envelope, and the container marked.

Footprints, Tire Tracks, or Tool Marks

Footprints, tire tracks, or tool marks will be covered and preserved in such a manner so as not to destroy them until they have been properly preserved or collected.

Volatile Fluids

When preserving volatile fluids or articles impregnated with the substance, they will be placed into a clean airtight container as soon as possible. When appropriate, the tag will indicate that the package contains either a volatile substance or a material impregnated with a volatile fluid. If doubt exists as to the proper method of handling, packaging, or disposing of volatile fluids, fire department investigators will be contacted for advice and/or assistance.

Explosives

Explosives or dangerous munitions found at a crime scene will be handled by an EOD technician in accordance with EOD operating procedures.

Poisons

Poisons will be placed into non-metallic containers, and marked or tagged.

Removable Articles

An article of evidence that can be moved will be handled with the utmost caution to prevent alteration, contamination, or destruction. The item will be tagged for identification.

Glass

Glass should be picked up around the outer edges with tweezers. It is extremely important to obtain all pieces of glass at certain crime scenes, such as the scene of an automobile felony.

Bits of glass collected should be placed securely in a nonplastic container to help preserve possible latent fingerprints.

Scrapings and Stains

Removal - Blood, semen, and saliva will be removed from an object only by a specialist and in as large a sample as is possible. In addition, a background control standard of the object upon which the stain has been found will be taken.

Contamination - Scrapings, especially blood, will only be collected by the FIS technician on scene. Care should be taken not to touch a stain or scraping, as contamination of the sample can occur.

Trace Items - Trace evidence is an item which is microscopic in size, and will only be collected by appropriately-trained personnel.

CANVASS QUESTIONNAIRE FORM PROCEDURES

Locating witnesses during an investigation can be critical to the development of a case. Conducting a timely, organized canvass greatly increases the probability of locating witnesses and enables detectives to better assess the situation and direct the investigation.

Canvassing Responsibilities

The patrol sergeant, or on-scene officer in charge will organize a canvass immediately after securing the crime scene. Written documentation of the canvass includes a canvass diagram, an Area Canvass List form and a Canvass Questionnaire form (Appendix B), which must be completed for every contact made, regardless of whether a subject is located within a residence, on foot, in a vehicle, etc.

The canvassing officer should attempt to make contact at every residence/business within the predetermined canvass area. If contact is not made, a written note will be left containing the case number, call classification, and instructions to contact the Detective Division as soon as possible.

If a subject is a witness, or has information relative to the case, on-scene detectives will be notified immediately to conduct a more in-depth interview.

Canvass Questionnaire forms will immediately be turned over to the assigned detective to evaluate for possible witnesses or expansion of the canvass.

(Appendix A)

RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT
DEATH INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

A. Preserve Life

B. Arrest Suspect

C. Protect Scene

Handle every dead body call as a homicide until it is determined to be otherwise. Officers should proceed through the steps below until the death is determined to be accidental, a suicide, or due to natural causes.

1. Initial Call:

{ } Record exact time call received and type of call broadcast.

2. Arrival at Scene:

{ } Record exact time of arrival.

{ } If ambulance crew is not present, determine if possibility of life exists.

{ } Enter immediate crime scene area to view victim. Use one path.

{ } If a possibility of life exists, apply appropriate rescue and first aid techniques and summon ambulance to scene.

{ } Record alterations to the crime scene that were necessary to determine victim's condition, i.e., lights, body moved, etc.

{ } Protect the crime scene. Cordon off vulnerable area.

Note: If accidental or suicide, refer to paragraph 8. If natural death, refer to paragraph 9.

{ } If victim is removed by ambulance crew, ensure one officer accompanies the victim to the hospital. If death is imminent, try to obtain a dying declaration.

{ } If victim's clothing is removed at the hospital, the accompanying officer will take possession of the clothing, book the items into evidence, and place a hold for detectives/FIS personnel.

{ } Record names, addresses, DOB, and telephone numbers of all persons at the crime scene. Remove them from immediate area and maintain control.

{ } If ambulance crew is present, record names, and obtain statements if necessary.

- { } Determine if ambulance crew or any other person moved the body or any items within the crime scene. If any alterations were made, record them.
 - { } What alteration(s) were made.
 - { } When made.
 - { } Purpose for making alteration.
 - { } Responsible party.
- { } Initiate and maintain a Crime Scene Attendance Log. Record names of all persons who enter the scene.
- { } If reporting person is present, obtain a valid identification, record identity and knowledge of the crime.
- { } If suspect fled the crime scene prior to officer's arrival, initiate crime broadcast if information is available.
- { } Supplement broadcast as necessary.

3. Preliminary Investigation

- { } Witness: isolate, separate. Do not permit contact with any suspect. Obtain valid ID. Complete FI.
- { } Examine entire crime scene area, by one officer preferably. Conduct visual examination only. Use one route.
- { } Do not touch areas or surfaces where possibility of evidence exists. Wear gloves if available.
- { } Do not smoke inside crime scene areas.
- { } Do not flush toilets or run water in sinks or tubs.
- { } Record any alterations necessarily made at crime scene; e.g., unlocking doors, opening windows, turning on lights, etc., during your investigation.
- { } Depart from immediate crime scene using one route, preferably the same as entry.
- { } Secure and protect the crime scene pending the arrival of detectives.

Attention: Searches of an emergency nature to locate suspect(s) or additional victims can be made. However, crime scene searches for evidence will be made by Detective Division personnel, in full

compliance with the provisions of the Mincey decision, requiring either consent or a search warrant.

4. Notifications

- { } Make notifications by telephone if possible. Do not use any phones located inside crime scene.
- { } Record time of notification and person notified.
- { } Contact a supervisor and apprise him/her of the situation.
- { } When Detective Division personnel are not on-duty, request the supervisor contact an on-call Detective Division team.
- { } Provide a call-back number where you can be contacted.

Note: If death is an apparent crib death, notify the Youth Services Unit during normal business hours or a supervisor will handle the notification.

5. Expansion of Crime Scene Control

- { } The assigned officer will ensure that no one enters the crime scene, including other officers and the news media.
- { } Make no statements to the news media. Refer to the On-scene commanding officer.
- { } Do not direct comments regarding the incident to spectators, etc.

Exceptions: Doctors and fire department ambulance crews will be permitted to protect life; Record their names. Clergymen will be allowed to approach dying persons or dead bodies.

Note: Persons allowed to enter the crime scene will be accompanied by an officer and cautioned regarding contamination or alteration of evidence.

- { } Determine scope of general crime scene; i.e., outside terrain, garages, yards.
- { } Establish an Entry Control Point.
- { } Identify location for command post and press area.
- { } Establish a perimeter, secure and protect the general crime scene.
- { } Request additional units if necessary, and assign to specific security locations.
- { } Request ropes, barricades, or other equipment necessary to protect the scene and control spectators.

{ } Supervisor will assign officer(s) to begin canvass and diagram of area where canvass was conducted.

6. Assistance to Detective Division Personnel

{ } Stand by for Detective Division personnel.

{ } Continue to protect the crime scene until relieved by Detective Division personnel.

{ } Assist Detective Division personnel as directed by them.

7. Suspect In Custody

{ } Determine if suspect is armed. Search for weapons.

Note: If a weapon is recovered, record the description and location recovered in report. Maintain custody of the weapon and be guided by Detective/Forensic Investigation Section instructions regarding booking.

{ } Do not attempt to unload weapons or change position of evidence. Maintain control.

{ } If suspect is arrested outside of crime scene, do not return suspect to crime scene. If suspect is apprehended inside, immediately remove from the crime scene.

{ } Note and preserve evidence found on suspect; i.e., blood, debris, and advise on-scene investigator.

{ } Do not permit suspect to wash hands or use toilet to avoid contamination of evidence on his person.

{ } Do not permit any communication between suspect and other parties.

{ } Do not initiate interrogation phase with suspect.

{ } Do not Mirandize, but carefully record all spontaneous statements.

{ } Observe and record behavior of suspect; i.e., sweating, nervous, emotional, erratic actions, or lack of unusual behavior.

{ } Transport to station if directed by Detective Division personnel or the situation warrants such action.

8. Suicide and Accident

{ } If death appears to be suicidal or accidental, handle as a homicide. Proceed with

homicide checklist, summarized below.

- { } Secure immediate scene.
- { } Preserve all evidence such as weapons, pills, vials and notes in their original locations.
- { } Notify supervisor. Supervisor will notify Detective Division personnel as appropriate.
- { } Advise witnesses to complete statements.
- { } If an ambulance was summoned, obtain crew information for death report.

9. Natural Deaths

- { } Do not remain alone with deceased. Request responsible relative to remain with you.
- { } If possible, two officers should be present.

Note: Do not search the body or premises.

- { } If an ambulance was summoned, obtain crew information for the death report.
- { } Determine history of illness and if a doctor has been in attendance, including medication used by the deceased.
- { } Request a supervisor.
- { } Notify the Coroner's office.
- { } Stand by until Coroner's arrival. If Coroner agrees that the death is natural, complete the deceased person report.

RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT

Major Case Canvass

Case #

Address _____

Person Contacted _____

Sex _____ Race _____ DOB _____ SS# _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Employment Address _____

Vehicles _____

Additional Occupant _____ Sex _____

DOB _____ SS# _____ Work Phone _____

Employment Address _____ Hours _____

Additional Occupant _____ Sex _____

DOB _____ SS# _____ Work Phone _____

Employment Address _____ Hours _____

***ATTACH A WRITTEN STATEMENT, IF PERSON(S) CONTACTED PROVIDED INFORMATION**

1) Can the Crime Scene be observed from this Address? Yes _____ No _____

2) Were Delivery/Utility people in the area? Yes _____ No _____

3) Does the occupant know the missing person? Yes _____ No _____

NOT CONTACTED / NO ANSWER: _____

Comments

Officer/ID# _____ **Date/Time:** _____