

RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT GENERAL ORDER

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Chief of Police: Jason Soto /s/		
Approving Deputy Chief: Thomas Robinson /s/		
General Order No: D-110-04	Issued: September 16, 2004	Revised: December 1 st , 2021
General Order Title: CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION		

I. POLICY

The actions taken by personnel responding to the scene of a crime often determines the outcome of the investigation. These actions include an appropriate 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.

RPD employees, regardless of assignment or rank, will approach a 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 evidence. Employees will preserve crime scenes and assess the need to utilize additional resources such as detectives, the department's Forensics Unit, the Medical Examiner's Office, etc. Employees will preserve crime scenes until they process the scene for evidence or until released by a supervisor or any additional resource that is brought in for the investigation.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Officer's/CSO's Responsibilities While Waiting for Detectives or other Resources

1. Preserve the Crime Scene – The major task of preserving the crime scene is to prevent certain actions from taking place, including: touching items or surfaces that are likely to yield latent fingerprints or biological evidence; moving items or disturbing the bodies of deceased persons, and; unnecessary walking in the area of the crime scene especially in areas likely to contain evidence such as shoeprints or tire impressions. Officers/CSO's will immediately employ crime scene preservation measures, which include but aren't limited to:

- a) Removing people, animals or anything else from the scene that could compromise evidence;
- b) Separating witnesses and/or suspects;
- c) Establishing a perimeter and keeping spectators from areas that may contain physical evidence;
- d) Protecting and covering critical areas in order to protect evidence from being exposed to smoke, rain, snow, or direct sun;
- e) Establishing an entry control point to restrict entry and securing all possible exits;
- f) Establishing command post outside of crime scene;

2. Record the Crime Scene – Efforts must be made by officers/CSO's to observe details, particularly those that are subject to change. For their reports, officers/CSO's shall note:

- a) Time of call;
- b) Time of arrival;
- c) 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;
- d) Names of victims, suspects, witnesses;
- e) Condition of doors, windows, and furniture;
- f) Lighting conditions, including position of light switches;
- g) Odors and other transient evidence (smoke, gas, perfume, water condensation, etc.);
- h) Signs of activity (meal preparation, cigarette in ashtray, ice in glass, etc.).

3. Search of the Crime Scene – For crime scenes located in an area where a person may establish a reasonable expectation of privacy, a warrantless search of that scene may only occur under the following exigent circumstances:

- a) To determine if a victim is on scene and in need of assistance;
- b) 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 their 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.

4. 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.

B. Investigations with Injured Persons

Officers' initial responsibility is to the injured, even though it may give the suspect time to escape and/or destroy evidence. Upon determining that any injured person needs emergency medical treatment the officer will:

1. Render aid in accordance with their training, abilities and knowledge and until relieved by EMS personnel;
2. When practicable, direct medical personnel into the area in such a manner so as not to alter or destroy items of evidentiary value.

With severely injured persons, officers will perform all of the above and will also:

1. Continue any life saving measures once commenced, until relieved or until death is pronounced by an appropriate authority;
2. Document the actions of medical personnel on scene, and if transported, in the emergency room, which may alter the crime scene or evidence. Actions documented should include any objects moved, areas traversed, and evidentiary items altered or destroyed (e.g., footprints, bloodstains, drag marks, bullet holes in clothing, etc.);
3. Accompany the injured and note statements or declarations made if the injured is to be transported by ambulance;
4. When permissible, remain with the injured in the emergency room and during medical treatment;
5. Evaluate any items removed from the injured by emergency room personnel for evidentiary value and collect when appropriate;

6. Ensure photographs are taken of the injured, their injuries and anything of evidentiary value;
7. If the victim dies in the emergency room, ensure that no tubes, IV's, or catheters are removed from the body and the body remains in an unaltered state until transported to the Medical Examiner's Office.

C. Death Investigations

Only sworn personnel will conduct death investigations. Protection of the scene and evidence are critical in death investigations. It is the responsibility of the responding officer to initially treat each death investigation as though it is a homicide until the likely cause of death can be determined. In cases where death is obvious or death has been declared by an appropriate authority, officers:

1. Will initiate crime-scene protection;
2. Will notify a supervisor;
3. May deny access to EMS Personnel for the purpose of scene/evidence preservation.
4. May refer to the Death Investigation Checklist (attached) as a guide to aid in their investigation.
5. Will complete necessary reports and/or forms.

D. Jurisdiction Terminated Coroner Cases

When a Death Investigation has been classified as Jurisdiction Terminated by the Medical Examiner's Office, officers do not need to complete a report or take photos.

E. Call-out Procedures

Additional personnel, such as detectives, the Forensics Unit, the Medical Examiner's Office and the District Attorney's office, may be notified of active investigations, with supervisory approval. Their response is dictated by their chain-of-command.

1. **Detectives** – Detectives may be notified of active investigations in accordance with the corresponding unit's call-out procedure.
2. **Forensics Unit** – The department's Forensics Unit should be notified of active investigations that involve significant crimes including but not limited to high-loss burglaries and suspicious death investigations.
3. **Medical Examiner's Office** – The Washoe County Medical Examiner's office is responsible for investigating 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.
4. **District Attorney's Office** – The District Attorney's On-Call Team may be notified when any of the following crimes occur:
 - a) Any crime resulting in death;
 - b) Kidnap;
 - c) Sexual assault with serious bodily harm;
 - d) Assault where death may result;
 - e) Felonious motor vehicle crashes resulting in death;
 - f) Other major cases with serious impact on the community.

F. Forensics Unit's Responsibilities

Members of the department's Forensics Unit are responsible for processing crime scenes involving but not limited to homicide, sexual assault, robbery, high-loss burglary, officer involved shooting, and death investigations. Members of the Forensics will make every effort to document, conserve, and collect evidentiary items in order to aid the investigative process.

Each crime scene will be treated and processed on an individual basis taking into account environmental factors, size of the scene, and safety issues. Additionally, members of the Forensics Unit are responsible for:

1. Determining the best course of analysis of the crime scene;
2. Documentation of the crime scene in form of digital photography, note taking, and/or diagramming (sketch and/or digital diagram);
3. DNA swab collection (stain, residual/touch, and/or reference/elimination);
4. Latent fingerprint processing of evidentiary items;
5. Fingerprint processing of persons;
6. Evidence collection/preservation;
7. Presumptive testing (Hemastix and Luminol);
8. Maintaining a chain of custody of evidentiary items.

G. Canvass Procedures

An investigative canvass is a systematic initiation of contact with individuals, residents and businesses within a predetermined area surrounding a crime scene. Whenever an investigative canvass will benefit an investigation, a supervisor will initiate a canvass and ensure that canvass forms are completed for every residence/business within the designated canvass boundary.

RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT DEATH INVESTIGATION CHECKLIST

Actions at Scene of Death Investigations

- Minimize crime scene contamination by using one entry path, when practicable.
- Render aid when appropriate.
- If death is obvious or a medical authority has declared death, secure scene.
- Initiate crime scene protection measures.
- Identify people on scene and separate them from each other until they are interviewed. Obtain Witness Statements.
- Obtain a suspect description and broadcast as appropriate.
- Initiate a Crime Scene Attendance Log and records names of all who make entry.
- Establish appropriate inner and outer perimeters and ensure those aren't contaminated or manipulated, so as to preserve any potential evidence. Record any manipulations for the report.
- Ensure supervisor is responding and consulting with or calling out detectives.
- Do not manipulate or alter any item on scene, including any weapon or other evidentiary item, unless it poses a threat to officer safety in its unaltered state.
- Take photos of scene and any items of evidence, even if FIS is requested.
- Command notifications
- Whenever Detectives are notified or respond, assist them as requested

Transported Victims

- If victim is being transported, ensure an officer accompanies victim in the ambulance.
- Attempt to solicit dying declaration.
- Make note of any moves of the victim or evidence made by medics/fire personnel for subsequent reports.
- Identify medics/fire personnel for subsequent report.

Victims at the Hospital

- Take photos of the victim and treatment when practicable.
- Photo and take possession of any removed clothing, evidence, etc. Package and secure said items and determine whether or not to book into evidence or FIS.
- Update lead investigator and/or supervisor of victim's condition and prognosis.
- Identify medical staff for subsequent report.
- Remain with the victim until relieved.

Suspects

- Assign officers to search for suspect.
- Evaluate use of plain clothes units, if suspect's location is known.
- Once in custody, determine if suspect's clothing is or contains evidence.
- Do not manipulate any evidence located during search incident to arrest.
- Keep suspect away from crime scene, other suspects, victims, witnesses, etc. and do not allow them to communicate.
- Do not allow suspect to wash or use restroom until a determination is made about the potential of evidence in or on his/her person.
- If possible, coordinate interview/interrogation with detectives when appropriate.
- Provide Miranda when required.
- Ensure suspect is transported either to jail or to station for interview.



RENO POLICE DEPARTMENT
Major Case Canvass **Case #** _____

Address _____

Person Contacted _____

Sex _____ DOB _____ SS# _____

Home Phone _____ Work Phone _____

Email Address _____ Employment Address _____

Vehicles _____

Additional Occupant _____ Sex _____

DOB _____ SS# _____ Work Phone _____

Employment Address _____ Hours _____

Additional Occupant _____ Sex _____

DOB _____ SS# _____ Work Phone _____

Email Address _____ Employment Address _____

***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:** _____