

Techniques of Crime Scene Investigation



Chapter 2

First Officer at the Crime Scene

The Case of the Lady in Cement



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First Officer at the Scene

- Must be concerned with countless details
- Protect the scene
- Success may hinge on actions of first responder
- Prevent the destruction of evidence



First Officer at the Scene

- Do not add material that may mislead investigators
- Any contact with the scene changes it
- Locard Exchange Principle
 - Edmond Locard (1877-1966)
 - Every contact leaves a trace

First Officer at the Scene

- Keep detailed contemporaneous notes
- Resources of agency and nature of crime dictate what level of protection is used
- Do not approach in haste
 - If things can go wrong they will
 - BE AWARE
 - No hard and fast rules
 - Conditions and situations vary greatly from one scene to the next

Recording the Time

- Precise notations of time can be very important
 - Suspect's alibi
- Arrival time, time crime was committed, time officer was called
- Lend precision and credibility



Entering the Scene

- Use caution; look out for potential evidence
- Observe & note details (especially fleeting details)
 - Doors- open, closes, locked
 - Windows- open, closed, locked
 - Lights- on or off, which were on
 - Shades, shutters, blinds- open or closed
 - Odors- cigarette, gas, gun powder, perfume
 - Signs of activity- meals, dishes in sink
 - Date/time indicators- mail, newspapers, stopped clock

Entering the Scene

- Nothing should initially be moved
 - Unless absolutely necessary
- Before moving something the location should be noted
- Do not eat, drink, use toilet, turn on water at the scene

Protecting the Integrity of the Scene

- Protect the scene
 - Non-essential police personnel
 - Press
 - Family
 - Curiosity seekers
 - String rope, perimeter tape, use vehicles, barricades, etc.

Protecting the Integrity of the Scene

- General rules...
- Indoor scenes:
 - Central scene and entry/exit paths
- Outdoor scenes:
 - Ample area secured to include entry/exit paths



Injured Person

- Saving lives takes precedence over all else
- Note position
- Guide medical personnel into the scene
- Accompany victim to hospital
- Collect clothing

Dead Person

- Check for signs of death
- Summon coroner/medical examiner
 - Legal jurisdiction over body
- Note position of body prior to removing
- Hanging: do not cut down if unmistakable signs of death
 - Knots in rope should not be untied

Firearms/Ammunition

- Do not move firearms/ammunition until investigators arrive
 - Unless situation dictates it, i.e. unsecured scene
- Never insert anything into barrel
- Grasp checkered area
- Note position prior to moving
- Note condition of the gun

What to Do Until Investigators Arrive

- Arrest/detain/search any suspects at the scene
- Write down names of witness/others at scene
- Establish basic facts
- Keep suspect(s) and witnesses separated
- Do not discuss the crime with bystanders
- Listen attentively
- Protect evidence that is in danger of being destroyed

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Limit access by using tape/incident log
- Identify possible routes used by the suspect
- Note original conditions
- Record any changes
- Protect evidence
- Conduct administrative duties outside the tape

Don't

- Permit unnecessary personnel to enter
- Use routes possibly used by suspect
- Assume others will note conditions
- Fail to document any changes
- Allow evidence to be compromised
- Eat or use any facilities/phone

Dos and Don'ts

Do

- Record location of evidence before moving it
- Package trace evidence into large envelopes
- Keep an open mind
- Be aware that you are a potential source of evidence
- Take photographs of items at 90 degrees with scale
- Call expert

Don't

- Remove items and package without documentation
- Package trace evidence in a bundle
- Ignore items that appear out of place
- Touch anything unnecessarily
- Photograph without a scale
- Limit your photos to overall