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LAURENS COUNTY LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

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SOP# I-050

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SUBJECT: CRIME SCENE PROCESSING

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INDEX AS: CRIME SCENE PROCESSING

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EFFECTIVE DATE: 2/15/2006 REVISED DATE:  
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I. PURPOSE:

Processing the crime scene is one of the most crucial functions of the Identification Section. Properly processed crime scenes serve the investigation by providing valuable clues as to the occurrence of the crime and the identity of those involved.

II. DEFINITIONS:

- A. Crime scene: Any location to be searched for physical evidence to establish the fact a crime was committed, the facts of the crime, the eventual identity and successful prosecution of the perpetrator.
- B. Known Standard- Comparative sample for analysis from a known source.

III. ORGANIZATION AND ADMINISTRATION:

- A. In all cases, a Crime Scene Investigator will be either scheduled daily for related work functions or be on call notice. It shall be the responsibility of the On Call Investigator to arrive in a timely and prompt manner generally within 30 minutes. If there is to be a delay, the Communication Center will be notified with the circumstances for the delay.

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- B. All request for service are to be responded to in a prompt manner. It will be the responsibility of the Command Deputy to determine the particular features of the case and take appropriate measures to insure adequate crime scene protection is assigned until the Crime Scene Investigator arrives .
- C. It shall be the intent of this Department to schedule meetings that will enhance the coordination of the Investigative Division, Lab Services and the Judicial System. The Captain Investigator will meet with the District Attorney and Judges of the Courts to coordinate any benefits from knowledge of the investigative and procedural concerns of the District Attorney and the Courts.

IV. CRIME SCENE RESPONSIBILITY:

It shall be the responsibility of the person processing the crime scene to meet with the Command Officer to determine the particular aspects of the incident.

- A. Verify that any crime scene perimeter fully encompasses the area to be searched and that an officer is assigned for crime scene protection allowing only essential personnel within the perimeter along with written documentation.
- B. Notify the Sheriff and/or Major of all major crime scenes.
- C. Determine that all equipment and personnel required to work the scene are available.
- D. Locate and identify all physical evidence.
- E. Document the scene and evidence with notes, photographs and crime scene sketches as required.

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- F. In major crime scenes, it is vital that all physical evidence is collected and necessary documenting photographs are taken. It shall be the responsibility of the Crime Scene Officer/Investigator in charge of the scene to include in his/her report the reason (s) for the above not being done.
- G. Complete a detailed property receipt. The receipt must include a full description of items with serial numbers, color, size, along with any other pertinent information. This property receipt will remain at all times with the property seized.
- H. Transport evidence to the Laurens County Law Enforcement Center or appropriate crime lab when further examination is necessary.
- I. A written report will promptly be submitted to the supervisor. This report shall detail the investigation and list all information pertinent to the case.
1. Date and time of arrival at the scene;
  2. Officers present at the scene;
  3. Location of the crime scene;
  4. Case number;
  5. Name of the victim, if known ;
  6. Action taken at the scene, including the number of photographs taken, measurements taken (crime scene sketch) and a listing of physical evidence recovered.

Additional information that should be included is the date and time a request for service was received, the name of the investigating Deputy, the disposition of the physical evidence and of the exposed negatives.

- J. Properly package and label evidence to be forwarded to an outside laboratory. All necessary submission forms will be properly completed and attached for evidence tracking.

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K. Pass verbally or written preliminary information to the Investigative Officer that contain pertinent facts concerning the crime scene investigation.

V. CRIME SCENE PHOTOGRAPHY:

For proper documentation through photography, photographs must be taken to show the overall location of the scene and the relationship of evidence within the scene. A sequence of photographs should be used for this purpose; i.e. , overall photographs, mid-range photographs and the close-up photographs. Notations will be utilized when the use of a scale is needed. The use of written documentation will be used as to shutter speed, lighting technique, film and camera type , whenever crime scene photography is being accomplished.

VI. CRIME SCENE SKETCH:

The following information must be included in accurately documenting a crime scene and for the location of physical evidence within the crime scene.

- A. Overall dimensions;
- B. Location- i.e. relationship to other buildings, roadways or other.
- C. The correct address, including the apartment number, floor and room number.
- D. Measurements and location of significant items within the scene.
- E. North directions for directional reference point.
- F. Location of evidence discovered.
- G. Case number, date, time and case officer preparing the sketch.
- H. A key or legend explaining measurements and items within the sketch.

A rough sketch shall be done at the crime scene including the measurements and necessary information so that a final, scaled drawing can be completed at a later date.

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VII. PROTECTING, COLLECTING AND PRESERVING EVIDENCE:

Proper methods of protecting, collecting and preserving evidence shall be utilized. Evidence shall be placed in clean, unused containers, as dictated by the type evidence collected, to avoid contaminating the evidence and rendering it inadmissible in court- blood samples will not be sealed into plastic containers,- items believed to be bearing latent prints will not be packaged so as to destroy, alter or add prints. Further steps should be taken to refrigerate blood and other body fluids as soon as possible to deter putrefaction.

VIII. FIELD PROCESSING OF EVIDENCE:

When practical, physical evidence shall be processed at the scene and released by signed receipt to the owner. Evidence shall be processed by the best means available to the individual who works the scene to identify the person responsible for the crime. Precautions shall be taken to insure evidence is not lost, destroyed, contaminated or otherwise altered during processing and/or collection. Proper methods of collections shall be utilized. Evidence shall be placed in clean, unused containers, as dictated by the type evidence collected, to avoid rendering it inadmissible in court. Items possibly bearing latent prints will not be packaged so as to destroy, alter or add prints.

IX. SUBMITTING EVIDENCE TO A FORENSIC LABORATORY:

A. It shall be the responsibility of the Crime Scene Investigator to arrange for submittal of evidence to the Division of Forensic Sciences or other forensic laboratory.

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- B. Evidence shall be submitted to a lab promptly upon a written request being received from the crime scene investigator in charge of the case. Evidence can be submitted when there is a suspect or when there is a possibility that evidence will be destroyed, to test for the presence of narcotics, dangerous drugs or alcohol, or whenever evidence is perishable such as biological fluids.
  - C. All evidence to be submitted to the Division of Forensic Sciences must have an approved Division of Forensic Sciences Submission form. Any evidence submitted to any other forensic laboratory will be submitted with general case outline of the circumstances and services requested along with a property receipt form. All evidence submitted must be clearly marked by a case number, date, time, type of evidence, location, investigating officer and item description and item number.
  - D. Evidence submitted to the Division of Forensic Sciences will be packaged according to their evidence submission requirements. In the event the Division of Forensic Sciences will not accept a questioned sample without a known sample for comparison, the questioned sample will be retained at the Laurens County Law Enforcement Center for safekeeping until a known comparison sample is available.
  - E. In the event a delay is experienced in any manner pertaining to the submission of any evidence to the laboratory, this delay will be documented in writing in the form of a Supplemental Report to the Crime Scene Investigators' original report.
- X. STANDARDS FOR COMPARISON:
- A. A collection of physical evidence without known standards for comparison is often of little evidentiary value. Therefore, it is imperative that known standards be collected in sufficient quantities whenever they are available.

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- B. The known sample is to be submitted to the Division of Forensic Sciences at the same time as the sample in question, both packaged in separate containers in order to avoid contamination.
- C. A written finding will be included in the Crime Scene Investigators initial report documenting the location, item and physical appearances of each known source.

XI. CRIME SCENE SKETCH:

A rough sketch should be done at the crime scene including the measurements and necessary information so that a final, scaled drawing can be completed at a later date.

The following elements will be included in a crime scene sketch made pursuant to the collection and preservation of evidence.

- A. Overall dimensions;
- B. Location- in relationship to other buildings, roadways or other;
- C. The correct address, including the apartment number, floor and room number;
- D. Measurements and location of significant items within the scene;
- E. North directions for directional reference points;
- F. Location of evidence discovered;
- G. Case number, date, time and name of person (s) preparing the sketch;
- H. A key or legend explaining measurements and items within the sketch.

XII. PHOTOGRAPHY/VIDEO TAPES:

- A. Photography is another method of recording and documenting a crime scene and evidence.
- B. For proper documentation through photography, photographs must be taken to show the overall location of the scene and relationship of evidence within the scene.

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- C. A sequence of photographs should be used for this purpose- overall photographs- mid-range photographs- and the close-up photographs. Additionally there are times when scaled photographs are necessary- shoe tracks or tire tracks. A ruler should be included in the photographs. These photographs should then be duplicated without the use of a scale using the same camera, shutter speed, lighting technique and film. This second photograph will be made in the event the court may require a photograph with no added items such as the scale (ruler).
- D. In major crime scenes, it is vital that all physical evidence is collected and documentation is complete. Photography is another method of recording and documenting a crime scene and evidence. All photographs will include the following information:
1. Date;
  2. Time;
  3. Location;
  4. Case number;
  5. Film type;
  6. Camera setting.
- E. Video tapes of crime scenes and evidence are vital, but should not replace still photography. Application of the use of video tapes will be dictated by the severity of the crime and the type evidence documentation.

XIII. EXAMINATIONS AND ANALYSIS:

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the Crime Scene Investigator to assume the responsibility of requesting laboratory examinations outside the realm of capabilities of this Department.
1. The Crime Scene Investigator determines if supplemental lab services are to be conducted on collected evidence.

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2. Any evidence collected and handled by anyone other than the Crime Scene Investigator will follow these same guidelines .
  3. All evidence will be accompanied by a Chain of Custody Sheet at all times.
- B. In all cases where evidence is submitted to a laboratory for analysis, it shall be the responsibility of the Crime Scene Investigator to promptly complete a report, detailing the results of the investigation. Evidence submitted to the Division of Forensic Sciences or any other laboratory for analysis shall be accompanied by the appropriate forms. This form shall list the items and the type of analysis to be performed. At the conclusion of this examination, the Deputy/Agency will receive a written evaluation of the results.

XIV. PROCESSING RECOVERED STOLEN VEHICLES:

- A. It shall be the responsibility of the Crime Scene Investigator to assume the following responsibility when processing recovered stolen automobiles/vehicles or automobiles/vehicles involved in major crimes.
1. Reporting Agency- (Outside Department) will be notified of the recovery.
  2. Owner will be notified of the recovery.
  3. Crime Scene Investigator and Captain of Investigations will be notified of the recovery.
  4. The vehicle and its contents will be processed for items of evidentiary value.
  5. A chain of custody will be maintained at all times.
  6. Conditions for release will be specified.
  7. The processing officer will determine all services that are to be performed on any recovered automobile/vehicle.

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XV. EVIDENCE IDENTIFICATION AND CUSTODY:

- A. The Deputy submitting evidence for examination purposes shall do so in the following manner:
1. Mark all items submitted for identification purposes;
  2. Make a complete and correct list of all items, as to description- amount-make- size- and serial numbers or others. This should be listed on the property control sheet and detailed reflections in his/her initial report.
  3. Attach the white original copy of the Property Control Sheet to the property/evidence.
  4. Retain yellow copies of the Property Control Sheet and attach the same to the offense report/case file/supplemental report.
- B. The Deputy impounding the evidence/property shall turn the evidence/property into the Evidence Custodian during the same tour of duty whenever possible unless directed by his/her supervisor to do otherwise.
- C. When evidence is secured and received at the crime scene by the Crime Scene Investigator, a property inventory list shall be made and the same reflected in his initial report and/or supplemental report and shall be secured in the Evidence Storage Facility during that same tour of duty.
- D. The Deputy shall make a separate listing of all evidence items recovered during an investigation. This listing will separately include a description of the item (including make, model number, and serial number, if any) the source (from whom or location which obtained) and name of the person who collected the item or items. The Crime Scene Investigator will also observe the above procedures when securing evidence items.

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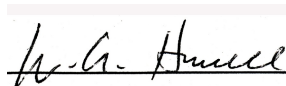
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- E. A Chain of Custody/Property Form must be maintained and properly documented. This Custody/Property Form is to be completed and signed each and every time an item of evidence is transferred from the custody of one individual to another and will include the following:
1. Date and time of transfer;
  2. Receiving persons' name and functional responsibility;
  3. Reason for the transfer and in the event to an outside receiving Agency/Lab ;
  4. Name and location of the laboratory, synopsis of the event and examinations desired.
- F. All evidence to be submitted to the Division of Forensic Sciences must have an approved Form.

Any evidence submitted to any other laboratory will be submitted with a Chain of Custody/property receipt form. Required copies of the signed Division of Forensic Sciences Submission Forms will be obtained by the submitting Officer/Agency. Mailing of evidence will be documented by Registered Mail Receipt and Lab Submission forms.

  
W. A. HARRELL  
SHERIFF

2/15/2006

EFFECTIVE DATE: