



# DESCHUTES COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Policy Title: <b>Major Crime Scene Investigation</b>	Effective Date: June 28, 2016	Policy Number: <b>7.01</b>
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Attachments:	L. Shane Nelson, Sheriff	

## I. PURPOSE

It is the purpose of this policy to provide deputies with guidelines for responding to and dealing effectively with the operational demands at crime scenes.

The actions taken by patrol and investigative deputies at crime scenes often determine the course and success of a criminal investigation. Initial responding deputies play the lead role by protecting the crime scene, rendering emergency services and initiating the investigation.

## II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Sheriff's Office that all deputies understand and follow applicable procedures established herein to effectively protect, collect, and preserve evidence of a crime and conduct initial investigative and other essential tasks at major crime scenes.

## III. PROCEDURES

### A. Initial Response

Initial responding deputies shall initiate the preliminary investigation and perform tasks as designated below until otherwise directed by a supervisor, detective, or other deputy assigned as the primary investigator.

1. While enroute to crime scenes, deputies shall identify and document persons and vehicles that may be fleeing the scene.
2. Upon arrival, the deputy will determine whether or not a crime has been committed and relay essential information to 9-1-1 Dispatch.
3. Administer first aid and/or summon emergency medical assistance if required and take those steps necessary to protect victims or others.
4. Arrest the perpetrator if at the scene. A decision to leave the crime scene to arrest or pursue the perpetrator should be based on weighing the immediate needs of victims and others against the safety of the public if the perpetrator was allowed to escape.
5. Provide 9-1-1 Dispatch with pertinent information, such as:
  - a. nature of the crime committed;
  - b. description of the perpetrator and mode/direction of flight;
  - c. description of any vehicle used by the offender and any accomplices;
  - d. use of firearms or other deadly weapons; and

- e. any support required at the crime scene.
6. Remove persons from the immediate scene to the extent possible and protect the scene from disturbance or contamination.
7. Record any alterations made at the crime scene due to emergency assistance to victims, the actions of persons reporting the crime, handling of any items of evidentiary value or other actions.
8. Attempt to take preliminary photographs of the scene as it was initially found prior to or during first responder activity, such as medical treatment of victims.
9. Define the boundaries of the crime scene to include all areas that may reasonably be searched for evidence. As necessary:
  - a. request backup assistance to restrict access to the crime scene and control any on-lookers;
  - b. secure with crime scene tape, lock or posted guard to secure the immediate crime scene;
  - c. restrict access to defined crime perimeters; and
  - d. record any alterations made at the crime scene due to emergency assistance to victims, the actions of persons reporting the crime, handling of any items of evidentiary value or other actions.
10. Identify any witnesses to the crime, obtain their identities, and request that they remain present in the area until they can be interviewed. Efforts should be made to separate witnesses prior to the interviews, if at all possible.
  - a. when reasonably possible, obtain the identities of any other persons who were present upon arrival at the crime scene; and
  - b. note the license plates of vehicles parked near the crime scene and be aware of suspicious persons on hand at or near the crime scene.
11. Establish an Incident Command Post for responding personnel to report to.
12. Initiate a crime scene log.
13. Provide supervisors and any other investigative personnel arriving on the scene with complete information on the offense and the measures taken thus far by deputies and others.

#### **B. Preservation of the Crime Scene**

1. Responding deputies shall enter crime scenes only for purposes of aiding victims or bystanders in need of immediate assistance, apprehending perpetrators or securing the area.
2. Other entries shall be permitted only under direction of the person in charge of the investigation.
3. Deputies making initial entries for the above purposes shall, where feasible, avoid touching, walking upon, moving objects or otherwise altering or contaminating the crime scene.
4. Protect any evidence that is in danger of being altered or destroyed.
5. Restrict all persons from the crime scene who are not directly involved in the investigation. In the case of homicides or other major crimes, the deputy-in-charge shall ensure that the identity of all persons entering or leaving the crime scene is recorded using a crime scene log.
6. Homicides and other major crime scenes should be approached only as needed in a single defined line in order to avoid destruction of footprints and other impressions and the contamination of scent trails that may be useful in canine searches. The "place last seen" of kidnapped or missing persons should also be protected in a similar manner.

#### **C. Photography**

1. In addition to preliminary photographs of the scene upon arrival, a complete photographic survey of the scene shall be completed.

2. Once secured, a series of photographs should be taken of the primary elements of the scene. These can be used to brief deputies and others who are restricted from entering the scene.
3. A complete photographic survey of the scene includes the following:
  - a. video of the entire perimeter and a 360-degree survey of each room or area relevant to the scene.
  - b. a complete set of still photos duplicating the video survey. Each photo should overlap the previous one so every inch of wall and floor space is photographed. Use a field of view large enough to provide reference points for the context of the pictures;
  - c. close-up detail photos, using a scale of relevant evidence, such as blood smears or spatter, footprints, damage to fixtures, furniture or personal property;
  - d. initial documentation of any injuries to individuals present;
  - e. photographs of witnesses or other people involved in the incident showing their clothing and condition at the time;
  - f. video of any persons gathering around the perimeter or others watching investigative activities;
  - g. documentation of any exam of a homicide victim completed at the scene, specifically photographing any significant discoveries; and
  - h. individual photos of each item seized as evidence showing the item number. Consider one close-up showing detail and a second, wider field shot showing context.

#### **D. Collection of Evidence**

Refer to [Policy 7.40 Physical Evidence](#).

Unless exigent circumstances exist or authorization of a supervisor is received, initial responding deputies at major crime scenes shall not engage in collection of items of potential evidentiary value.

Deputies may engage in the following tasks as directed by the deputy-in-charge:

1. The chain of possession of all evidence shall be clearly and completely documented in accordance with agency policy beginning with initial collection, packaging and labeling at the crime scene.
2. In a manner or method prescribed by the deputy-in-charge, deputies shall search the crime scene for any items that may establish how the crime was committed or who committed the crime. This may include, but is not limited to:
  - a. unusual objects or objects found in unexpected or unusual locations; and
  - b. weapons, tools, clothing, stains, blood spatters, fingerprints, footprints, tire or tool mark impressions, broken glass, fibers, soil, or other items or substances.
3. Deputies shall comply with [Policy 4.10 Evidence Control](#) to properly photograph, preserve, package and label criminal evidence.

#### **E. Interviewing Witnesses**

Witnesses at the crime scene shall be identified and preliminary interviews conducted as soon as possible. Deputies shall comply with [Policy 7.10 Interviews, Interrogations and Confessions](#), while performing this task. Additionally, the neighborhood surrounding the crime scene should be canvassed as soon as possible in order to identify additional witnesses or others who may have some knowledge of the crime.

The purpose and scope of these interviews is to gather as much basic information as possible about the crime at the earliest point possible in order to identify the perpetrator and establish the basis for the follow-up investigation. Neighborhood canvass forms should be used.

#### **F. Crime Scene Reporting**

Deputies conducting the preliminary and follow-up investigations shall complete appropriate reports in accordance with agency policy. Agency approved checklists shall be utilized to ensure all elements are covered. Reports shall include:

1. Date and time of arrival at the scene;
2. Any relevant weather or conditions at the scene to include the status of the crime scene upon arrival e.g., fire, crowds, and initial observations;
3. How the crime was discovered and reported and the relationship of reporting individuals to victims or others;
4. Identity of other deputies or emergency personnel present upon arrival and those who responded to the crime scene thereafter;
5. Physical evidence discovered and deputies responsible for collection. Special note should be made of any valuables collected at the scene, such as currency or jewelry;
6. Name, address, and telephone number, or other appropriate identification of witnesses to the crime;
7. Results of interviews with victims and witnesses to include in particular the identity or best possible description of suspects, method of operation, means of escape, and any other pertinent identifying information;
8. Diagrams, sketches, photographs, videotape or other similar information from the scene, as well as the identity of deputies or civilians who made such recordings; and

Follow-up recommendations for continued investigation, such as the names of witnesses or others who may be able to provide additional information.