



San Diego County Sheriff

Training Bulletin

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Crime Scene Management Update

The purpose of this Training Bulletin is to provide guidance and to assist you in managing your crime scene.

FIRST RESPONDERS

As a first responder to a major crime scene, it is important to remember your responsibilities are to:

- * Provide immediate care to the victim and/or suspect, if officer safety permits.
- * Identify the suspect(s).
- * Protect the crime scene.
- * Locate, obtain identification and keep witnesses separate.
- * Restrict all unauthorized persons from the crime scene.
- * Identify all responders who enter the crime scene and maintain a major incident log.
- * Obtain written documentation from all personnel entering the crime scene or handling potential evidence, etc. (except shooters in officer involved shootings)
- * Make appropriate notifications.
- * If the scene(s) requires a Homicide response, refer all Media to Homicide.

DEPUTY INVOLVED SHOOTINGS AND USE OF FORCE RESULTING IN DEATH

Supervisors shall address the following:

1) Safety statement:

The field supervisor has the responsibility of talking to the deputy(ies) involved immediately upon their arrival to ascertain public safety information*.

**(Public safety statements are defined as those received from the involved deputy (ies) at the incident (e.g., outstanding suspects, how many suspects, direction of travel, mode of transportation, description, where deputies were when they fired, are there outstanding weapons, was the suspect wounded, etc. The field supervisor can order the deputy (ies) to answer these questions without the presence of an attorney, if necessary.)*

2) Preservation of the crime scene and evidence.

3) Deputy's gun, uniform, equipment.

4) Deputy's location, companion and welfare. The involved deputy (ies) shall not be allowed to change clothes or clean up unless absolutely necessary for required medical attention.

5) Identification and separation of witnesses.

ESTABLISHING BOUNDARIES

The crime scene boundaries should be large enough to include all the evidence and accommodate the investigative staff and equipment. Consider layering the crime scene larger than you believe necessary. As the investigation proceeds, investigators can easily reduce the size of the scene when appropriate.

(Layering is defined as the subdividing or compartmentalizing of the area between the inner crime scene and the outer perimeter. It is accomplished by using multiple layers of barrier tape to accommodate individuals with different connections to the scene; such as investigators, command staff and media).

In the event that the decedent/victim is in public view and there is a large public gathering and/or media response, consider maximizing the layering of the scene past your existing crime scene borders, leaving the existing barrier tape. Adequately layering the crime scene serves multiple important functions:

- * Ensures the protection of the crime scene.
- * Prevents the contamination of the crime scene.
- * Prevents the destruction of potential evidence.
- * Manifests sensitivity to the victim, the victim's family, and the public.
- * Accommodates the needs of the media and other professionals.

Note: All departmental or allied agencies' personnel who enter the crime scene shall submit a report, documenting their presence and their actions while in the crime scene, including all items touched, disturbed, moved and observed.

THE VICTIM

The decedent of a homicide or suspicious death shall not be moved, nor should their clothing, pockets, or personal effects be examined or removed from their body. They shall not be covered without prior approval from the homicide sergeant.

If the victim is transported for emergency medical treatment, a deputy shall accompany the victim to the hospital. This will ensure the chain of evidence is preserved and memorialized and spontaneous statements can be documented. The deputy escorting the victim can ensure medical personnel are aware the victim's clothing and personal effects must be preserved for evidence.

EVIDENCE

Evidence should not be moved, disturbed or collected by first responders. During the course of the investigation, it is important that investigators evaluate evidence in its natural state within the crime scene. If any evidence is collected under exigent circumstances or for deputy safety, maintain custody of the evidence until relinquished to the assigned lead investigator or crime laboratory personnel.

Note: Removing evidence from the crime scene impacts the chain of evidence and can cast doubt in the jury's mind. Under no circumstances should evidence be removed from the crime scene and later returned or replaced.

WEAPONS

Weapons found at the crime scene shall not be modified from the condition in which they were discovered and shall be left where found. The only exception is for deputy safety.

In deputy-involved shootings, it is critical that the deputy's weapon be retained by the involved deputy. The weapon shall not be modified in any fashion following the shooting. The only exception is for deputy safety. A member of the Homicide Detail will exchange the weapon with a like weapon.

PHOTOGRAPHS

As a matter of routine, no photographs of the crime scene or the victim will be taken independent of the Sheriff's Crime Laboratory Technicians. If photographs are taken it should be reported to Homicide during the initial briefing.

NOTIFICATION OF THE HOMICIDE DETAIL

Homicide notification shall be made through the Communications Center. The patrol sergeant should make these notifications whenever practical. If notifications are going to be made by the patrol deputy, prior approval should be obtained from the patrol sergeant. The above procedure is intended to minimize unnecessary notifications.

When?

Immediately notify the on-call Sheriff's Homicide Sergeant under the following circumstances:

- * Homicides
- * Suspicious deaths
- * Sudden infant deaths
- * Deputy/Officer involved use of force deaths
- * All deaths involving inmates in custody of the Sheriff (except natural deaths)
- * Adult kidnappings, where the victim is outstanding and at risk
- * Felony assaults where death is probable
- * All Deputy/Officer Involved Shootings resulting in death or injuries
- * Suicides involving: - All juveniles - High profile individuals - Public figures likely to gain extensive media attention - Witnessed suicides

Adult suicides not fitting the above criteria DO NOT require immediate notification of the Homicide Detail.

Prior to notifying the Homicide Sergeant, attempt to identify the following during your preliminary investigation:

- * Type of incident
- * Forced entry
- * Signs of struggle
- * Ransacking
- * Valuables in plain view
- * Unexplained trauma to the deceased
- * Hospital where victim was transported and prognosis
- * Weapon(s) condition or location
- * Historical background of victim and/or address
- * Suspect information
- * Suicide note

The Homicide Sergeant will need this information to determine if a Homicide response is appropriate and/or logistical needs.

The Homicide Sergeant does not require immediate notification on the following:

- * Natural deaths
- * Non-suspicious deaths
- * Non-criminal death investigations handled by the Medical Examiner

In cases where an inmate is hospitalized for medical reasons only, (not use of force) and the death is natural, immediate notification is not required. Voice mail notification to the Homicide Detail will suffice.

If you are in doubt as to the nature of the incident, you can call the Homicide Sergeant for guidance. The Homicide Sergeant will base their decision to deploy Homicide investigators to the scene on the information you provide.

If the crime does not warrant a Homicide team response, but technical assistance is needed on your case, do not hesitate to contact the Homicide Detail for advice and/or assistance. The Homicide Detail can be utilized as a resource in our investigation. The Homicide Detail can be reached during business hours at [REDACTED]. After hours, you can contact the on-call Homicide Sergeant through the Communications Center. Additionally, the Homicide Detail is available for patrol briefings, scenario participation and/or training, and as investigative support.

REFERENCES:

Departmental policies and Procedures

- * Section 6.33 = Major Crimes
- * Section 6.61 = Homicide Detail Case Responsibility
- * Section 8.2 = Firearms: Discharge During Performance of Duty

The information in this Training Bulletin was provided by and edited for distribution by the In Service Training Unit. If you have expertise in a particular subject and would like to write a training bulletin, please contact Corporal Michael Cruz at In Service Training, [REDACTED]
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