

JOPLIN POLICE DEPARTMENT	9-10 STANDARD OPERATING GUIDELINE
SUBJECT: Crime Scene Procedures	REVIEW DATE: Annually - September
EFFECTIVE DATE: March 24, 2011	ACTION DATE:
AMENDS/SUPERSEDES: April 3, 2012	AMEND DATE: September 18, 2020
ACCREDITATION INDEX: 83.1.1, 83.2.1, 83.2.2, 83.2.3, 83.2.4 a, b, c, d, 83.2.6, 83.2.7 d, 83.3.1, 83.3.2 a, b, d, 84.1.1 c, d	APPROVED:  Chief of Police

I. POLICY

Proper documentation, collection, and preservation of physical evidence may provide the key to a successful investigation and prosecution. Through evidence located at the scene, suspects are developed or eliminated, investigative leads are established, and theories concerning the crime are substantiated or disproved. It is imperative, therefore, that each officer carefully processes a crime scene not to overlook or contaminate or destroy evidence. Physical evidence appears in many shapes, sizes, and forms, thereby necessitating various recovery, preservation, and submission techniques. The officer or investigator shall be prepared to collect, identify, and package the evidence so that it will not be changed in form and value when it reaches the laboratory. The officer collecting the evidence shall maintain a chain of custody of that evidence to ensure that it is presented to the court professionally and in compliance with the law.

II. PURPOSE

To establish responsibilities for officers/investigators in processing crime scenes and to establish guidelines for the proper documentation, collection, and packaging of physical evidence.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Chain of custody

The chain of custody is the series of documented links between the time the evidence was obtained until presented in court. The links are officers who handled the evidence, and where and when they did so.

B. Exclusionary rule

The exclusionary rule requires that evidence seized or discovered in violation of the suspect's Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Amendment rights cannot be admitted in court.

C. Evidence

Any substance or material found or recovered in connection with a criminal investigation.

D. Evidence custodian

The evidence custodian is the employee designated by the chief to have administrative oversight over all found or confiscated property that comes into departmental possession.

IV. PROCEDURES - General crime scene processing (83.2.1)

A. Responsibilities of the first officer at a crime scene

The officer responding to a crime scene shall perform the following:

1. Arrive at the scene promptly and safely.
2. Provide aid to the injured
3. Protect the scene to prevent the destruction or contamination of evidence.
 - a. Officers must prevent unauthorized persons from entering the crime scene or the immediate area. In the event of a major crime scene, Supervisors shall limit access to crime scenes to those persons immediately and directly connected with the investigation. Those persons not immediately and directly connected to the investigation shall not enter the crime scene. This rule applies to other officers of the department, other agencies, or members of the community, regardless of rank or position.
 - b. In the event of a major crime scene, supervisors shall assign an officer to maintain a log to document all parties who enter and exit the crime scene. The log should include the party's name, and the date/time of entry and exit.
 - c. An officer must not touch, move, or pick up objects or disturb in any manner any article, mark, or impression that may have been made by the person or persons committing the crime with the exception of the officers/investigators responsible for processing the crime scene.
 - d. Assigned officers will maintain rigid security until relieved of crime scene responsibility.
4. The Patrol supervisor should determine if the crime scene is one that will need to be processed by a criminal investigator. If so, an investigator will be notified and proceed with the follow-up investigation. If the scene is not one that needs to be processed by an investigator, then the originating officer will continue the investigation. (83.1.1)
 - a. Certain serious offenses of the type listed in SOG 9-02 V. SERIOUS CRIMES – CRIMINAL INVESTIGATOR RESPONSE require that an investigator or a crime-scene technician process the crime scene.
5. Photograph and diagram the scene when appropriate.
6. Locate, collect, identify, preserve, and package evidence.
7. Submit evidence to the forensic lab for analysis.
8. Locate witnesses
9. Prepare the original offense report.

(See SOG 9-02 for a discussion of preliminary and investigative procedures at crime scenes.)

B. Preliminary Scene Survey

Officers shall first note the total environment of the scene including, for example, whether doors and windows are open or closed, lights on or off, presence of odors, weather conditions, temperature and

the condition and circumstances of the victim. Officers must note these original observations in the incident report.

C. Photographing the scene - general (83.2.2) (83.2.4 B)

At the end of the preliminary scene survey, overall photographs of the scene shall be taken from several vantage points. Use a wide-angle lens to obtain an overall establishing view, followed by mid-range shots and close-ups as appropriate.

D. Information to be recorded on photography of crime scenes (83.2.2) (83.2.4 B)

1. The officer shall record the case number on each roll of film, Digital media recording or video tape:

2. A crime scene ID card should be photographed to identify each crime scene photographed. The crime scene ID card shall include the following information:

- a. Case number
- b. Type of Crime
- c. Location (address)
- d. Officer taking the photographs
- e. Date photographs taken
- f. Time photographs taken

3. Crime scene investigators may use video photography at major crime scenes. Video photography should include:

- a. Overall views of the crime scene
- b. Mid-range views
- c. Close-ups
- d. Macro-shots

E. Crime scene diagram (83.2.4 C)

Before moving objects at major crime scenes (except where necessary to help a victim, apply first aid, or handle a suspect), officers shall prepare a diagram of the scene. Minimum detail to be contained in the diagram includes the following:

1. Time and date of preparation.
2. Location of offense.
3. Location of items of evidence in the scene and their relationships to one another, including any items that appear displaced or damaged.
4. Location and names of victims, witnesses, and suspects.

5. Relationship of the crime scene to other rooms, buildings, or roads.
6. Name of person preparing the diagram.
7. Direction of north.
8. Scale drawings are not necessary.
9. Location of lights and whether they are on/off.
10. Location of windows and whether they are open/shut.
11. Location of radio/television and whether they are on or off.

F. Location of evidence - measurements (83.2.4 C)

When necessary, before collecting any item of evidence, take measurements using triangulation or the coordinate method.

G. Overall measurements (83.2.4 C)

Obtaining wall, room, and building measurements is one of the last operations to be performed in processing the crime scene. The overall measurements are vital in the production of the final crime scene diagram but must be obtained last so as not to damage or destroy items of evidence.

H. Latent fingerprinting (83.2.3)

Fingerprints shall be identified and lifted where possible. If transporting evidence may damage or destroy the latent prints on it, then the evidence shall be processed for prints at the scene.

1. When an officer/detective processes a scene for latent fingerprints, the proper department equipment (powder, brushes, tape, etc.), will be utilized.
2. If latent fingerprints are lifted from a scene, the following procedure will be followed:
 - a. The tape with the lifted print will be placed on the plain side of the white or black 3X5 card. The following information will be included:
 - i. Print 1, 2, 3, etc. (the number is used as a reference for incident reporting)
 - ii. Report Number;
 - iii. Officer/Detective and employee number;
 - iv. Location where print was taken from;
 - v. Date
 - b. If a known source for fingerprints is available for elimination purposes:
 - i. The subject can be printed on scene;
 - ii. If a ten-print card is not available on scene, note cards may be used;
 - iii. Print cards shall contain identification information of subject printed

along with the report number and location where the prints were taken;

- iv. The card shall be dated and signed by the collecting officer and submitted into evidence for elimination purposes
3. Latent fingerprints will be properly packaged, and an evidence voucher attached and submitted into evidence. (83.3.2 B)
 4. When evidence is conveyed to the station for latent print processing, the processing will be done by a detective or sent to a forensics laboratory. (83.3.2 B)
- I. Collection of Evidence – A common error is overlooking or disregarding the importance of physical evidence left by the criminal.
1. After locating an item considered pertinent to the case under investigation, it should not be disturbed until it has been photographed, measurements taken, its position recorded on the crime scene diagram, and processed for fingerprints when necessary.
- J. Identification of Evidence: All recovered evidence must be immediately and properly marked or labeled to assure its proper identification at some later date. (83.3.2 B)
1. Each piece of evidence must be noted when it is removed from its original position.
 2. Evidence shall be packaged (if possible) individually and the packaging shall be “heat sealed” or sealed with “evidence tape”.
 3. The officer that packaged the evidence shall write his/her name or initials from the evidence packaging onto the “evidence tape” or “heat seal” and shall affix a properly filled out evidence voucher to the packaging so that the evidence can be identified in court.
- K. Preservation of Evidence: Selecting a container that will guard the specimen against damage or contamination may further protect the integrity of evidence. (83.3.2 B)
1. Place each item in its own container or paper wrapping.
 2. After the article has been marked, placed in a container, and sealed, a property record (evidence voucher) will be affixed. The tag shall be filled out completely (see Evidence and Property Management, IV A 4).
- L. Chain of Custody: (83.2.1) The correct methods used in collecting, identifying, and packaging evidence may be nullified if an officer cannot account for all persons who have handled, examined, or stored the evidence. The chain of possession begins when the evidence is discovered and continues until it is presented in court. (83.3.2 D)
1. Each officer is responsible for maintaining the chain of custody and protecting the integrity of his/her evidence. If an officer checks out a piece of evidence from the evidence facility the following should be considered:
 - a. Limit the number of persons who handle the evidence from the time it is checked out until it is presented in court.
 - b. If the evidence leaves the officer's possession, he/she should document the

following information:

- i. To whom the evidence was transferred.
 - ii. The time and date.
 - iii. The reason for being transferred to another person.
 - iv. When and by whom it was returned.
- c. When the evidence is returned to the officer, the officer should verify his/her personal identification mark and make sure it is the same item he/she turned in and that it's in the same condition as it was when recovered and make notation of the chain of custody in a written supplement to the related incident report..
- M. Final organized search: Conduct a final, thorough search of the crime scene in case evidence may have been overlooked. Wherever possible, on a final search use an officer who has not participated in processing the scene.
- N. Documentation (83.2.6)
1. The officer/investigator processing a crime/incident scene shall prepare a report giving an accurate account of events. This information shall be placed in the offense/incident report and shall include the following:
 - a. Date and time the officer arrived at the scene.
 - b. The location of the crime.
 - c. The officer's actions at the scene.
 - d. The description of all evidence collected
 - e. The case number of any related report(s).

V. PROCEDURES - Evidence and property control (83.2.1)

A. Collection of evidence

1. When collecting evidence, the officer shall avoid touching the evidence with his hands or anything that might contaminate the item. Latex gloves should be utilized.
2. In collecting evidence, officers shall remain mindful about the possibility of infection if the crime scene contains body fluids. Further, some evidence may consist of hazardous chemicals or waste products, explosives, or highly combustible materials. The on-scene supervisor in consultation with command staff shall decide the best disposition of such items.
3. If a firearm is present at the crime scene, do not unload it without first carefully examining it and documenting the condition it was found in (i.e. a fully loaded revolver with two empty shell casings, one under the hammer, and one to the left of the hammer).
4. Proper order of collection

- a. Collect perishable evidence first. Perishable evidence such as fresh blood, blood-stained objects, physiological stains and tissue, or biological material are examples of perishable evidence. Consult with the Crime Lab if you are not certain on how to collect and preserve such evidence.
 - b. If the immediate destruction of evidence is not a concern, work through the scene systematically, collecting in a logical sequence, trying to avoid disrupting other items of evidence.
5. Collection of samples: The forensic laboratory can only compare known items with those showing similar characteristics. Sufficient specimens or controls must be submitted for comparisons of such items of hairs, fibers, paint, glass, soil, and tool marks. (83.3.1)
6. Documentation of each item collected: The officer processing the crime scene shall list each item collected in a narrative of the original incident report. Note the following information for each item. (84.1.1 C)
- a. A complete description of the item (including make, model, and serial numbers, if any);
 - b. The source (from whom or location from which the item was obtained); and
 - c. The name of the person collecting the item.

C. Packaging items of evidence (83.3.2 B) (84.1.1 D)

1. The officer who collects the evidence shall choose a container suitable to the type of evidence for packaging. Considerations in choosing the proper container include:
 - a. The size and weight of the item.
 - b. Whether the item is moist or wet (which could rot or deteriorate if packaged in plastic or an airtight container for an extended time).
2. Avoid any contamination of evidence by packaging all items separately.
3. Pack the item to minimize interior movement within the package.
4. Seal the package with tape or an evidence sealer.
5. Affix an evidence voucher to the exterior of the package before submitting it to an evidence locker.

D. Special circumstances

1. Weapons
 - a. No officer shall, under any circumstances, retain custody of any found or confiscated weapon for personal use.
 - b. Officers bringing weapons into custody shall inspect them to ensure their safe storage. All firearms shall be unloaded before storage. See section V.A.3 (83.3.2 B)

- c. The recovering officer or investigator shall check all confiscated or found weapons against NCIC / MULES files.
2. Drugs and narcotics (see SOG 9-04, V. B.)
3. Alcohol (83.3.2 B)
 - a. It is only necessary to collect one can or container of an alcoholic beverage for evidentiary purposes in alcohol violation offenses. The remainder can be destroyed. All containers of alcoholic beverages shall be sealed or contained to avoid any chance of leakage.

E. Preservation and submission of evidence to the forensic laboratory

1. Under normal circumstances, the evidence custodian will be responsible for submitting evidence to the forensic laboratory. The officer or investigator who logs the evidence will mark on the evidence voucher whether lab analysis is required. (83.3.2 A)
2. Preservation of perishable or deteriorating items: (83.3.2 B) (83.2.7 D)
 - a. When a rapidly deteriorating item of evidence has been collected (for example, a liquid sample of semen, a blood-soaked shirt), it shall be transported to the forensic laboratory the same day, if possible.
 - b. In cases where immediate transport to the forensic lab is not possible, observe the following procedures.
 - i. Refrigerate the evidence and then transport to the lab as soon as possible.
 - ii. Air dry body fluids and transport to lab when possible.
3. Where appropriate, submit known specimens of evidence so that comparisons can be made. The investigating officer shall be responsible for obtaining any required known specimens and submitting them, along with the items of evidence, to the forensic lab for analysis and comparison. (83.3.1)

F. Administration of property and evidence: The processing officer and/or investigator, when possible, shall check all property against NCIC or MULES records.

G. Legal requirements

Officers shall observe principles regarding the legal use of physical evidence. Officers shall rigorously maintain the chain of custody of all evidence and shall always remain mindful of constitutional safeguards. If officers are not scrupulous in observing these safeguards, then the exclusionary rule may prohibit key evidence from being introduced at trial and the case may be lost or dismissed.

H. Processing Equipment (83.2.4 A, B, D)

Officers who are assigned processing duties, have the following items available for their use:

1. Latent fingerprint kit containing: (83.2.4 A)
 - a. Fingerprint brush

- b. Roll of clear fingerprint tape
 - c. 3X5 fingerprint cards
 - d. Fingerprint powder
- 2. Camera – individual cameras are not available for all officers; however, cameras are available and may be checked out. (83.2.4 B)
 - 3. Assortments of containers suitable for the collection and preservation of evidence are available to all officers in the evidence building. (83.2.4 D)
 - 4. An Investigations Bureau Supervisor may authorize the Crime Scene Command Unit to respond to incident scenes for additional support and equipment.

VI. COMPLIANCE

Violations of this policy, or portions thereof, may result in disciplinary action as described in the City of Joplin's Personnel Rules or the Joplin Police Department's Rules and Regulations and General Orders. Members of the Joplin Police Department, while assigned to or assisting other agencies, shall comply with this policy.

VII. APPLICATION

This document constitutes department policy, is for internal use only, and does not enlarge an employee's civil or criminal liability in any way. It shall not be construed as the creation of a higher legal standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims insofar as the employee's legal duty as imposed by law. Violations of this policy, if proven, can only form a basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.