
	Operational General Order	8.04 Crime Scenes	PAGE 1 OF 2
	SUBJECT		EFFECTIVE DATE
	<b>Virginia Beach Police Department General Order Chapter 8 - Criminal Investigations</b>		<b>05/11/2017</b>
			ORIGINATOR/REVIEW
DISTRIBUTION		Investigative Division	
ALL		CALEA: 83.1.1, 83.2.4	
BY THE AUTHORITY OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE:			

### **Purpose (CALEA 83.2.4)**

To establish the responsibilities of the Forensic Services Unit and the Precinct Crime Scene Officer program and provide protocols for responding and conducting searches and collecting evidence at crime scenes.

### **Definitions**

Forensic Services Technician/Specialists- ancillary members who are trained and equipped to process crime scenes in order to provide investigative information through the application of various scientific techniques in the recognition, documentation, collection, and analysis of physical evidence recovered during criminal investigations.

Precinct Crime Scene Officers- sworn officers who receive basic training and are issued equipment to capture crime scene photographs and collect evidence (to include fingerprints, biological evidence, and other associated physical evidence).

### **Policy (CALEA 83.1.1)**

The first officer to arrive on the scene of a crime assumes full responsibility for protecting the crime scene until relieved by an incident commander, supervisor, or case investigator. While officer and public safety are paramount to evidence preservation, the officer must be careful to avoid unnecessarily destroying or diminishing the value of any evidence present within the scene. The responsible officer must not only limit his own movements at the scene but also keep all unauthorized persons from the area. Employees, victims, bystanders, curiosity seekers, and even other police officers that have no duties connected with the case must be kept out of the crime scene area. The crime scene will be secured by using crime scene tape or a similar medium. One officer will be assigned to maintain a list of the names of all persons who have entered the crime scene, commonly known as an Entry/Exit Log.

Forensic Services Technician/Specialists and Precinct Crime Scene Officers are available to respond to crime scenes on a continuous basis. Prior to requesting response, the investigating officer shall determine the following:

1. That evidence is present and has value to the investigation
2. If Forensics Technicians are responding, the scene is safe for ancillary personnel
3. There are no legal issues that would prevent the search and retrieval of evidence.

**The decision to call either a Forensic Technician or Crime Scene Officer should weigh less on the offense type and more on the complexity of the scene, skill level of the crime scene officer, and time needed to complete the task.** Crime Scene Officers should respond when a Forensic Technician/Specialists is not readily available and the Crime Scene officer can respond more quickly, at the request of the Forensic Unit Supervisor, or when directed by a supervisor.

Caseload demands may necessitate that Forensics Technicians/Specialists cannot respond immediately. Response will be prioritized based on the nature of the offense, the complexity and the nature of the evidence present at the crime scene, the need to expedite processing based on the conditions surrounding the crime scene (traffic, weather, crowds etc.), and the time needed to process and collect evidence.

The below list of offenses, **as well as requests for basic photos only**, will be the primary responsibility of the Crime Scene Officers. Forensic Technicians/Specialists will not respond unless extenuating circumstances dictate or only after supervisory approval:

- Cases assigned by CRU
- Larceny from vehicles
- Destruction of Property
- Public Relations Photos
- Minor Traffic Accidents
- Animal Control case

Forensic Services Technicians/Specialists or Crime Scene Officers will process crime scenes in accordance with science based best practices, current training, unit Departmental directives and the Virginia Beach Police Department Field Guide for Evidence Collection and Handling.