OFFICE OF THE COUNTY SHERIFF

Montgomery County, Maryland

Darren M. Popkin, Sheriff

GENERAL OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

Subject:	Number:	Effective Date:
Crime Scene	**3.27**	**12/01/11**

Purpose: This directive ***provides general guidelines for*** deputies arriving at a crime scene ***before*** the ***investigating*** agency. ***Priority must be given to the safety and protection of victims***, witness, and physical evidence.

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I. Approaching a Crime Scene

A. When deputies arrive at a crime scene, the first responsibility ***is*** to ensure the scene is made safe from any threat. Deputies should not rush into ***a*** crime scene. An armed suspect may still be present or accidental destruction or contamination of evidence may occur. Deputies should:

(1) Check for any victims, administer first aid and request ***Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services (MCFRS)*** be dispatched to the scene if medical assistance is needed. ***(41.2.4)***

(2) ***Determine if an offense has been committed and affect an arrest if a suspect is still on the scene.***

(3) If the incident has not been dispatched, deputies ***must*** notify ***Emergency Communications Center*** (ECC) and advise the nature of the incident, injuries sustained, and request the ***investigating agency*** be dispatched to the scene. ***Determine if there is a description of the suspects and provide a look out to the responding officers. (41.2.4)***

B. Deputies should not engage witnesses or victims in an in-depth interview. Only information such as injuries sustained, nature of the ***offense*** and lookouts for suspects, should be solicited. ***When possible any witnesses and victims should be kept separate from one another to prevent them from discussing the incident.***

II. Protection of the Crime Scene

A. Responsibility for the protection of the crime scene rests and remains with the first deputies on the scene until the arrival of the law enforcement agency having investigative responsibility or jurisdiction.

(1) Everything at or near the crime scene is potential evidence and must be preserved. Unless disruption is necessary to assist the injured victim, all unauthorized persons, including deputies, must be kept from the scene. ***Deputies may*** achieve this by establishing a perimeter around the crime scene. **(54.1.3)**

(2) Deputies ***must*** record the time of ***their*** arrival, observations made at the scene, and location of initial contact with the victim. ***Deputies must also document the presence of anyone, civilian or sworn law enforcement, coming into contact with the crime scene, noting the arrival and departure times and what action the individual took.***

(3) Deputies ***must keep*** any ***victims and*** witnesses at the scene for the ***investigating agency to interview.***

(4) Deputies will refrain from collecting evidence on crime scenes not investigated by the Sheriff's Office. Any evidence will be preserved in the location discovered and the investigating agency notified of its location.

B. Deputies will remain on the crime scene only until sufficient units of the agency handling the investigation have arrived. Deputies will relay all information gathered at the scene to the investigating agency after which time they are to resume their normal duties.

C. Deputies will complete an Incident Report (MCSO9) detailing their involvement on any crime scene ***before the end of their tour of duty.***

III. *Media*

Generally, on the scene of a newsworthy incident, members of the media should be allowed closer access to crime scenes than the public. Under no circumstances should the media be held back from an area where the general public has access. In public places, and places where the press may otherwise lawfully be, no action should be taken to prevent or interfere with the news media in photographing or televising an event, a suspect or accused person. However, the presence of camera technicians and crews must not be allowed to interfere with the proper handling of the incident. The use of yellow tape to cordon off a crime, accident, or collision scene will set the proper limits for the news media to follow. (54.1.3)

IV. CALEA Standards

41.2.4, 54.1.3

V. Cancellation

This directive cancels and replaces General Operation Procedure 3.27, Effective date ***05/01/95. Shred replaced directive.***

AUTHORITY:

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