

COLLECTION & PRESERVATION OF EVIDENCE

PURPOSE: To establish clear policies and procedures for the collection, handling, packaging, preservation, transporting, and processing of evidence.

POLICY: It is the policy of this Department to provide procedures that incorporate the effective application of scientific methods for the collection and preservation of physical evidence. It is also the policy to ensure that evidence in its custody can be properly secured and stored, readily retrieved, and that any changes in custody are properly and fully documented.

PROCEDURES:

I. AVAILABILITY OF CRIME SCENE PROCESSORS (12.02)

Qualified personnel are available on a twenty-four (24) hour basis to process a crime scene/traffic collision when criteria indicate a need for specialized abilities. The request for assistance from a detective or accident reconstruction officer "on-call" must be authorized by the on-duty Supervisor.

II. EVIDENCE EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES

Patrol Division and Criminal Investigations Division (CID) shall maintain equipment and supplies, in a portable state, ready to be transported to a crime or collision scene. The equipment and supplies will consist of those items necessary to accomplish the following crime or collision scene functions:

- A. Recovery of latent fingerprints;
- B. Photography;
- C. Sketch of the scene; and
- D. Collection and preservation of physical evidence.

III. CRIME SCENE OPERATIONS (12.01)

- A. Scene Security - The officer's first responsibility upon arrival at a crime scene is to locate and assist any person who is injured, or needs personal assistance. After completing the above part, the first officer on the scene shall initiate security measures to protect the crime scene to prevent destruction or contamination of evidence.
 1. Officers must prevent unauthorized persons from entering the crime scene or the immediate area.
 2. 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(s) committing the crime.
 3. Assigned officers will maintain rigid security until the follow-up investigation has collected all the evidence available.
- B. Call-Out for CID - The Criminal Investigations Division will be requested to respond to the scene on the following incidents, but is not limited to any other offenses when evidence is present and requires processing that cannot be processed by officers on scene.
 1. Death of a violent or suspicious nature (homicides or suicides);
 2. Rapes or suspected rapes that have recently occurred;
 3. Assaults with serious injury or death to the victim;
 4. Armed robberies of commercial institutions;

5. Kidnapping;
 6. Arsons;
 7. Commercial or residential burglaries with more than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000.00) missing and the crime scene is so extensive that it would require additional manpower beyond the availability of patrol to process; and
 8. Anytime assistance is requested.
- C. Collection of Evidence - A common error is overlooking or disregarding the importance of physical evidence left by the criminal. 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 sketch and processed for fingerprints, when applicable.
- D. Identification of Evidence - All recovered evidence must be immediately and properly marked or labeled in order to assure its proper identification at some later date.
1. Each piece of evidence must be marked when it is removed from the original position.
 2. Evidence will be marked by use of the officer's name and evidence/case number when practical.
 3. The identification mark shall not be placed where evidence traces may exist, such as on the sides of a recovered bullet.
- E. Preservation of Evidence - The integrity of evidence may be further protected by selecting a container that will guard the specimen against damage or contamination.
1. Place each item in its proper container and sealed with evidence tape and the officer's initials and badge number.
 2. After the article has been marked, placed in a container and sealed, a bar coded label will be affixed.
 3. The Jacksonville Police Department uses an electronic evidentiary system (Barcode Evidence Analysis, Statistics, and Tracking [BEAST] System) for the purpose of organizing and properly filing evidence. Officers should make every attempt to use the specified containers for each type of evidence.
 4. For the safety of all employees, all biohazard evidence shall be placed in the proper protective containers and red evidence tape shall be used to wrap around the protective container.
- F. Chain of Possession - 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. Each officer is responsible for maintaining the chain of possession and protecting the integrity of his evidence. To accomplish this task:
1. Limit the number of persons who handle the evidence from the time it is discovered until it is presented in court.
 2. If the evidence leaves the officer's possession, he should:
 - a. Record in the incident report or supplement to whom it was given.
 - b. The time and date.
 - c. The reason for it being given to another person.
 - d. When and by whom it was returned.
 - e. Make sure the persons handling the evidence affix their name, identification, and assignment to the package.
 - f. Obtain a signed receipt for the evidence containing the date and time of the transaction.
 - g. When the evidence is returned, the officer should verify his personal identification mark and make sure it is the same item he turned in and that is in the same condition as it was when recovered.