



# VIA TRANSIT POLICE DEPARTMENT

## Standard Operating Procedures



### *Section 703 – Crime Scene Duties*

Office with Primary Responsibility:	COP	Effective Date: Prior Revision Date:	March 21, 2018 New
Office(s) with Secondary Responsibilities:		Number of Pages:	4
Forms Referenced in Procedure:	None	Related Procedures:	Section 702

#### **.01 INTRODUCTION**

- A. This procedure outlines the duties of members who respond to the scene of a crime or assist in the initial investigation of a crime.
- B. This procedure is intended to provide guidelines to help preserve the integrity of the crime scene itself and all physical evidence at or near the scene.
- C. This procedure does not prescribe the procedures or methods to be used in the highly specialized area of collection of physical evidence by VIA Transit Police Investigators nor does it prescribe follow-up investigation procedures.

#### **.02 PHYSICAL EVIDENCE**

- A. The scene of any crime is physical evidence in itself. However, the best physical evidence is normally found at or near the site of the most critical action taken by the criminal against the property or victim.
- B. In order for physical evidence to be effectively used by the Investigator and the prosecutor, its presence must be recognized by the officers at or near the crime scene.
- C. Physical evidence must be properly preserved, recorded, and collected for it to be of use in discovering the facts of a crime.
- D. The first officer to arrive at the scene of a crime automatically assumes the responsibility of securing the crime scene area from unauthorized intrusions to protect any physical evidence.

#### **.03 DIMENSIONS OF A CRIME SCENE**

- A. No set of definite rules can be applied to defining the dimensions of the scene of a crime.
- B. While it is entirely possible the dimensions of a crime scene will be large, there are usually priority areas readily apparent to the trained officer or VIA Transit Police Investigator which should be given immediate protection.

#### **.04 SUPERVISORY OFFICERS' CRIME SCENE RESPONSIBILITIES**

- A. Supervisory Officers
  - 1. While the ranking supervisory officer at the scene of any call is in overall charge, they may delegate supervision to the assigned Sergeant or Corporal and acts as an overseer. They intervene only when they observe serious breaches of established procedure.
  - 2. Supervisory officers are in charge of supervising all lower ranking officers at any crime scene, including investigators.
  - 3. Supervisory officers proceed to any major crime scene or any crime scene where supervisory presence is requested and assess the crime scene to determine:
    - a. Whether there are sufficient officers at the scene. Request additional officers, if necessary;
    - b. The dimensions of the crime scene and the best method of protecting the scene;



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- c. Whether the proper quadrant has been established and the officers assigned are working it properly;
- d. Whether the proper information regarding the actor has been broadcast to officers working the quadrant;
4. Assign officers to specific duties required to correctly protect and process the crime scene.
5. Provide for the transportation of complainants and witnesses, if necessary.
6. Remain at the scene as long as necessary to ensure proper protection of the scene and supervises subordinates in the performance of their assigned functions.
7. Ensure all officers prepare the necessary reports.
8. Prepare a supplemental report describing any actions taken and the names and assigned duties of officers present at the crime scene.
9. Document in the written report and advise the Transit Police Investigator when there may be video available on the incident as outlined in Procedure Section 702.

#### **.05 OFFICERS GENERAL CRIME SCENE DUTIES**

##### A. Officer(s) Assigned to Crime Scene

1. Proceed to the crime scene and observe all conditions and events on the way to and on arrival at the crime scene.
2. Note any remarks made by the complainant, witness, or actor upon arrival at the crime scene.
3. Pursue and apprehend the actor if the actor is still at the scene, visibly fleeing the scene, or in the general area of the scene.
  - a. Interview and/or interrogate the actor or suspect; or
  - b. If the crime will be investigated by the follow-up investigator, the VIA Transit Police Investigator will interview and/or interrogate the actor or suspect.
4. Use caution when entering the crime scene so as not to destroy physical evidence.
5. Request EMS for any injured or sick persons.
6. Ascertain the actual type of crime committed.
  - a. If an emergency exists, the amount of time lapse involved and whether additional officers are needed to aid the injured and secure the scene; or
  - b. If an emergency does not exist, advise responding officers to slow down in responding to the scene of the crime.
7. If possible, obtain a description of the actor, the means, and direction of flight, and whether or not the actor is armed. This information is relayed to the dispatcher.
8. Secure and protect the crime scene and any physical evidence by preventing unauthorized persons from entering the crime scene area. Officers should pay particular attention to items which may contain DNA evidence.
9. Request the VIA Transit Police Investigator to process the crime scene for physical evidence.



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10. Locate, identify, and interview the complainant and witnesses:
11. Prepare the proper reports which describe the offense, including:
  - a. Any vehicles, persons, or suspicious activities possibly related to the offense which was observed on the way to the scene;
  - b. Time of arrival at the scene of the crime;
  - c. The name of all officers present, should supervisory officers not make the scene; and
  - d. Initial observations by the officer, including any res gestae statements made by the actor or dying declarations made by the complainant.
12. Continue protection of the crime scene and all physical evidence to maintain its integrity. Avoid handling items of physical evidence unless it is absolutely necessary to prevent its loss, destruction, or contamination.
13. When an officer must handle evidence to protect it from loss, destruction, contamination, or for the victim to receive proper medical treatment, the officer takes custody of the evidence, and:
  - a. Handles the item in the least intrusive manner to avoid destroying the item, fingerprints, or other trace evidence that may be on the item;
  - b. Marks the exact location where the evidence was found and points this out to the VIA Transit Police Investigator;
  - c. Protects the item from loss or unnecessary handling; and
  - d. Marks the item for later identification and turns it over to the VIA Transit Police Investigator or places the item in the Property Room as evidence. Care must be exercised to avoid destruction of latent fingerprints or trace evidence on the item when marking it.
14. When an officer must handle a firearm as evidence at a crime scene either prior to the arrival of the VIA Transit Police Investigator or because they are not available, the officer:
  - a. Assumes custody of the firearm when it is obvious the firearm must be removed to protect it from loss, destruction, or contamination;
  - b. Handles the firearm in the least intrusive manner to avoid destroying the item, fingerprints, or other trace evidence that may be on the firearm (i.e., does not rotate the cylinder, does not unload firearm);
  - c. As soon as practical, secures the firearm by placing it in the locked trunk of the officer's police vehicle;
  - d. Records the exact location of recovery, condition of the firearm, and marks it with his initials;
  - e. Places the firearm in the Property Room or turns the firearm over to VIA Transit Police Investigator upon their arrival and relates the location where it was found; and
  - f. Details their possession of the evidence in a written report.
15. All officers assigned to, dispatched to, or assisting at or near any crime scene where a felony apprehension has been made will prepare the necessary supplemental reports documenting the reason for responding and actions taken in regard to the call. A copy of the report will be forwarded to the VIA Transit Police Investigator.



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- B. VIA Transit Police Investigator Assigned to Crime Scene:
1. Upon arrival, immediately surveys the crime scene to determine:
    - a. The type of crime committed;
    - b. Whether additional equipment or personnel are needed to assist in processing the crime scene and request same from the dispatcher; and
  2. Establishes the perimeter of the crime using crime scene barrier tape, if necessary;
  3. Processes the crime scene for evidence (i.e., collects latent fingerprints, photographs, sketches, DNA evidence, etc.);
  4. Collects and preserves all physical evidence at the crime scene and places the physical evidence in the Property Room;
  5. Prepares the necessary supplemental reports of all actions taken, including the names of any officers who assisted.
  6. Identifies and interviews witnesses outside the immediate crime scene area;
  7. Makes arrangements for witnesses to give their statements and advises a Supervisory Officer when transportation is necessary.
  8. Prepares the proper supplemental report describing their actions.
  9. Document in the written report and advise the VIA Transit Police Investigator when there may be video available on the incident as outlined in Procedure Section 702.