

Scene Documentation

Policy:

Photographing the scene and the decedent creates a permanent historical record and provides corroborating evidence that constructs a system of redundancy should questions arise.

The responding investigator will document the following times in their report:

- initial office contact time
- scene arrival time
- departure time
- return to morgue time
- time of death
- time found
- time of 911 call
- time last known alive

Scene Safety

Scene hazards include unstable structures, body fluids, hostile family/bystanders, traffic, animals, environmental extremes, and chemical exposures.

Use personal protective equipment.

Obtain clearance to enter the scene from appropriate officials (fire, lead detective, hazmat).

Always have law enforcement escort when interviewing family bystanders or entering a private residence.

SCENE

- Upon arrival to the scene, the responding investigator will meet with the primary law enforcement officer on scene and establish a path of entry and exit if necessary to prevent scene disturbance.
- Identify and document transient/fragile evidence on and around the body (foam cone, blood spatter pattern, any other that may be lost, contaminated, or alerted with movement of the body).

The responding investigator will

- Prepare and photograph a placard with the case number and date;
 - Take progressive photographs as he/she approaches the scene;
 - Observe and photograph the general geographic location;
 - Observe and photograph the specific scene;
 - Observe and photograph the immediate location of the body;
 - Observe and photograph the condition of the area involved;
 - Photograph the relationship of the body to the scene;
 - Include close range photographs and pay attention to details;
 - Note and record the condition of the area adjacent to the body including signs of struggle or violence as well as any evidence of bodily fluids such as blood, vomit, urine or feces.
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Scene Documentation cont.

INDOOR SCENES

The scene investigator will document and photograph the following:

- Temperature, cleanliness;
- Presence of drugs, alcohol or tobacco;
- Medications;
- Presence of pets;
- Presence of adequate food or necessities of living (electricity, heat, plumbing, toilet, shower, kitchen, food and water)

OUTDOOR SCENES

The scene investigator will document and photograph the following:

- Temperature, moisture, air movement, wind chill;
- Weather conditions (i.e. snowing or raining);
- Insect or animal activity;
- Presence of drugs, paraphernalia and alcohol;
- Orientation from where the scene is in relation to nearest public access;
- Unattended vehicles, campsites or belongings;
- Trails, pathways;
- Elevation, terrain and accessibility;
- Apparent dump sites

The Scene Investigator will observe and photograph “association evidence” to help estimate date of death. This includes noting:

- Presence of newspapers or mail
- Television, radio or lights on
- State of any food or dishes; whether eaten or not
- Phone documenting last made or received call or last message left, last text message sent, social media and email activity.
- Video footage in the area