

	GENERAL ORDER	Effective: 10-01-2021	# 09-04
		Section: Operations	Replaces or Modifies: GO #09-04 (2-1-17)
		Title: Crime Scenes	
Issued by: Chief Deputy Mattie Provost			

Purpose:

To establish guidelines for activities conducted at crime scenes.

Policy:

All employees are responsible for maintaining the safety and integrity of each crime scene taking all reasonable steps to ensure the proper collection and preservation of potential evidence.

Definitions:

Crime Scene – The physical area that is reasonably connected with a suspected criminal episode that has reasonable potential to contain physical evidence associated with said episode. This includes but is not limited to criminal investigations, vehicle crash investigations, and major incidents that have the potential to impact public safety.

Minor Crime Scenes – Scenes that involve investigations of misdemeanor criminal events, non-violent felony property offenses, non-fatality crashes where the needs are for basic collection of evidence and response level is routine (generally no call outs of specialized units or need for direct supervisory oversight).

Major Crime Scenes – Scenes that generally involve expertise/specialization in the collection of evidence including but not limited to violent felonies, fatality crashes or any scene designated as a major scene by supervisory personnel.

Officer – Persons appointed as peace officers by the Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office (FBCSO) and any other employee performing duties that include the collection, preservation, or storage of evidence and/or property.

Evidence – Items that have the reasonable potential to aid in the solution of cases. This includes but is not limited to photographs, fingerprints, bodily fluids, digitally stored data, tools used in the commission of a crime, contraband, diagrams, etc.

Scene Commander - The officer who has overall responsibility for actions taken by all personnel at a crime scene. With that responsibility also comes authority to direct actions. Scene Commanders remain in command until relieved of that duty by another officer and/or higher authority.

Procedure:

I. General Expectations

- A. Officers will conduct activities at crime scenes consistent with their abilities, training, and expertise as it applies to the detection, collection, and preservation of evidence.
- B. Officers will abide by any existing Bureau Manual/SOP promulgated under authority of General Order 01-01 that concerns collection, preservation, documentation, storage of evidence and/or property.

II. Minor Crime Scenes

- A. In each case one person will be designated as primary officer. In calls where only one officer responds no specific designation activity is required. In calls where multiple officers respond, then one officer is to self-designate as primary via police radio or MDC.
- B. The primary officer is responsible for the following: conducting an investigation, collecting evidence, delivering evidence for storage, and preparing written reports/documentation.
- C. Non-primary officers who take part in the response to minor crime scenes will assist the primary officer in his/her functions as needed and complete necessary reports/documentation on actions taken.

III. Major Crime Scenes

- A. It is the responsibility of the first officer arriving at the scene to do the following:
 1. Take reasonable actions to preserve life (including but not limited to calling for medical assistance as needed).
 2. Take reasonable actions to protect property.
 3. Apprehend/Detain potential suspect(s).
 4. Provide details via police radio to assist other responding officers and indicate the amount of additional support needed at the scene.
 5. Once the scene is sufficiently stabilized;
 - i. Establish a crime scene perimeter identified by means of visible marking (such as barrier tape). It is recognized that each scene may require different strategies to ensure its integrity – tape is one option but there may be other means to secure the scene.
 - ii. Establish what officer will assume the duty of Scene Commander. Once established, the Scene Commander will remain until this person is relieved of scene command duties. Any establishment or change of Scene Commander will be communicated via police radio to dispatch and will be noted in CAD records.
- B. Supervision
 1. A supervisor will respond to each major crime scene, generally the first supervisor on crime scenes will be from the Patrol Division.
 2. Upon arrival a supervisor shall take over as Scene Commander (if more than one supervisor is at the scene then only one shall perform the role of scene commander– with requisite communication being made per III. A. preceding).
 3. As personnel from various divisional elements arrive at the scene (ex. Patrol, CID, CSU ...) there shall be an ongoing determination as to who is Scene Commander. In cases of conflict, resolution will be made by immediate contact of higher authority. Generally, once a scene is secured a Sergeant or Higher ranking authority from the CID chain of command will assume the Scene Commander role in most criminal cases. In fatality crashes and other incidents this role will generally be performed by Sergeant or Higher ranking authority from the Patrol Division chain of command.
- C. Entry into Crime Scene.
 1. Entry into the crime scene perimeter is restricted to persons having a specific need to be in the crime scene.
 2. Once the crime scene perimeter has been established an officer will be assigned to keep a log of any person entering and leaving the crime scene.
 - i. All officers entering this area are required to report same to the assigned officer so that record may be made.
 - ii. Any officer entering this area will complete a supplement report

detailing all action taken in the crime scene.

- iii. If there is any question as to a legitimate need for the person entering the crime scene, the logging officer will immediately seek clearance from the Scene Commander prior to authorizing entrance.
3. Majors and Higher ranking authority are authorized to enter any scene. The entry will be logged; however, duty to write a supplemental report only applies if specific action is taken concerning the investigative process.
4. Persons who are not personnel of the FBCSO are only allowed into the crime scene upon approval by the Scene Commander or higher authority.
5. Failure to follow the preceding (III. C) may be determined as failure to comply with this General Order.

IV. Crimes Scenes located within the County Jail.

- A. Crime scenes shall be secured utilizing similar methods found in this General Order where applicable. The role of Scene Commander will initially be the ranking officer on duty within the Jail.
- B. Any incident involving the death of an inmate will be immediately reported via chain of command to the Chief Deputy. The Chief Deputy will make assignment of investigating duties including but not limited to any outside agency involvement (see also General Order 03-06 for further instruction).

V. Any incident involving the death or serious bodily injury of a person in custody (in custody is defined in the Texas Code of Criminal Procedure Article 49.18) will be immediately reported via chain of command to the Chief Deputy. The Chief Deputy will make assignment of investigating duties including but not limited to any outside agency involvement (see also General Order 03-06 for further instruction).

VI. Any incident involving the death or serious bodily injury of any Fort Bend County elected official or employee (including but not limited to FBCSO employees) will be immediately reported via chain of command to the Chief Deputy. The Chief Deputy will make assignment of investigating duties including but not limited to any outside agency involvement (See also General Orders 03-07 & 04-06 for further instruction).

VII. Bureau Commanders are responsible for ensuring that the Sheriff and Chief Deputy are notified concerning major crimes and events and shall enact appropriate processes to accomplish this.

Only the Sheriff or Chief Deputy may authorize exceptions to this General Order.