

Physical Evidence Collection

Index Code: 1605.3

Effective Date: 02/01/10 (Revised 9/6/2022)

I. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to establish guidelines for the collection of evidence at crime scenes and other serious incidents.

II. Policy

It is the policy of the Queen Anne's County Office of the Sheriff to properly locate, collect, document and preserve physical evidence to maintain its integrity and usefulness for the investigation of criminal offenses. The collection, proper documentation, preservation and submission of physical evidence to forensic laboratories may provide the key ingredients of any investigation.

The crime scene is usually the starting point of a criminal investigation. Through evidence located at the scene, suspects are developed or eliminated, investigative leads are established, and theories concerning the crime(s) are substantiated or disapproved. Deputies must be prepared to collect, identify and package evidence so that it will not be changed in form and value when it reaches the Property Room. Maintaining the chain of custody of evidence in order to ensure that it is presented to the court professionally and in compliance with the law is of paramount importance.

III. Responsibilities

A. Deputies responding to a crime scene will ensure the following as needed/necessary:

1. Respond promptly and safely
2. Request assistance as needed
3. Provide emergency care if needed
4. Observe all conditions and events
5. Apprehend any suspect(s)
6. Protect the crime scene
7. Preserve and collect evidence
8. Locate and identify witnesses
9. Interview persons involved
10. Interrogate any suspect(s)
11. Complete all required reports

B. If an investigator from the Criminal Investigations Unit (CIU) responds to a crime scene, they may assume the investigation, and the deputy that first responded will complete either the initial report or a supplement report outlining their involvement and observations. When the services of a crime lab are required, it will be the responsibility of the investigating deputy/CIU investigator to ensure notification is made to the Maryland State Police Crime Lab.

IV. 24-Hour Availability

A. An investigator from the Criminal Investigations Unit must be available at all times to assist with the processing of crime scenes and the collection of evidence as needed.

B. A monthly "on-call" schedule will be distributed to all CIU investigators and posted in the Duty Officers' Room. Investigators and supervisors are required to be available on the days they are assigned each month. The on-call investigator will keep the agency issued cellular telephone (or other suitable means of contact) with them and notify their supervisor of any updated contact information for the on-call period. If called out to investigate a crime, the investigator will be appropriately dressed in accordance with policy and respond in a reasonable amount of time.

V. Equipment

Deputies are issued the necessary equipment to process most crime scenes to include at a minimum:

- Digital camera
- Fingerprint kit
- Crime scene tape
- Disposable gloves
- Various size evidence bags
- Blood-Borne Pathogens protection kit

VI. Photographing the Scene

A. Photographs will be taken during the preliminary scene survey before anything is disturbed.