

Louisville Metro Police Department

Standard Operating Procedures	SOP Number: 8.36
	Effective Date: 08/18/05 Prv. Rev. Date: 03/26/21 Revised Date: 09/07/23
	Accreditation Standards: KACP: 17.4, 20.3, 27.1, 27.5, 27.6
Chapter: Field Operations	
Subject: Crime Scenes	

8.36 CRIME SCENES

8.36.1 COMMAND (KACP 17.4)

The Incident Command System (ICS) will be established at all major crime scenes. The first responding officer or the most senior officer at the scene will be the Incident Commander (IC), until relieved on-scene by a commanding officer or lead detective. The IC is responsible for directing the activities of personnel at the scene and adherence to the procedures outlined in this policy.

8.36.2 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FIRST OFFICER ON-SCENE (KACP 17.4)

The first officer to arrive at a major crime scene will assume initial command, until relieved on-scene by a supervisor or the lead investigator. They will request any assistance needed to perform the following functions:

- Secure the scene. If an immediate threat is present, officers should approach the scene in a manner that minimizes the risk to themselves and maximizes the safety of the public.
- Aid the injured.
- Apprehend and detain the suspect(s).
- Protect the crime scene.
- Separate witnesses and victims from the suspect(s).

8.36.3 SELF-DEPLOYMENT

Officers should not self-deploy to a major crime scene unless specifically requested by MetroSafe or the IC. Officers who respond without the proper training and equipment may actually hinder law enforcement efforts. The IC, or their designee, is responsible for assigning the duties of responding officers in order to prevent confusion and the duplication of efforts.

8.36.4 AIDING THE INJURED

Officers will assess the physical injuries of the involved parties and notify MetroSafe if emergency medical personnel are needed. Officers will point out potential physical evidence to medical personnel or other person(s) who are administering Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), or other lifesaving measures, instructing them to minimize contact with such evidence (e.g., cutting through bullet holes, knife tears in clothing).

Members will not pronounce a victim as deceased (i.e. 10-80). No LMPD personnel, other than a physician, have the authority to make any pronouncements. Members will not direct another person to cease CPR, or other lifesaving measures, unless directed by Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel or a physician.

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8.36.4 AIDING THE INJURED (CONTINUED)

If the victim or suspect is transported to a medical facility, another officer should accompany them in the ambulance to document any comments made and to preserve evidence (e.g., clothing, personal items). If no officers are available to accompany the victim/suspect, the officer will stay at the scene and request medical personnel to preserve physical evidence and document any comments made by the victim/suspect.

8.36.5 PROTECTING THE CRIME SCENE

Establishing Perimeters (KACP 20.3b)

The initial responding officer will have the responsibility of establishing and defining the boundaries of the crime scene. The officer will erect physical barriers (e.g., barricades, cones, tape) to define the boundaries.

Boundaries should include the area in which the actual crime occurred, potential points and paths of entry and exit, and locations where evidence or involved individuals may have been moved.

Additionally, officers should establish a control perimeter. The control perimeter is a buffer zone established to protect the primary crime scene from contamination. The control perimeter should be large enough to incorporate the possibility of additional crime scenes while maintaining the integrity of the primary scene.

The crime scene will be protected from entry by unnecessary or unauthorized persons so that physical evidence is not altered, moved, destroyed, lost, or contaminated. An officer will be designated as the Crime Scene Entry Log Recorder and will be stationed at a selected entrance/exit point to the control perimeter. The Crime Scene Entry Log Recorder will maintain the integrity of the scene by denying access to nonessential personnel (e.g., media, political figures, officers who are not working the case) and documenting the arrival and departure times of legitimate persons who are involved (e.g., EMS, Fire Department personnel, investigating officers) using the Crime Scene Entry Log (LMPD #05-08-0138). The Crime Scene Entry Log Recorder will also notate on the Crime Scene Entry Log which officers have Body-Worn Cameras (BWCs). All division commanding officers will notify the lead investigator if any of their personnel were at the crime scene.

Limiting Contamination of the Crime Scene

The initial responding officer should preserve the scene with minimal contamination and disturbance of physical evidence. Whenever possible, they should establish a path from the entry point to the primary crime scene in order to limit the possibility of contamination from outside sources (e.g., medical personnel or additional officers).

Officers should make efforts to further minimize contamination by guiding medical or fire personnel to the victim while pointing out potential physical evidence in order to avoid its destruction/contamination. The officer will document the original location of the victim and/or objects that are moved during the course of lifesaving measures.

All persons will be prohibited from performing the following acts while at the crime scene:

- Eating and/or drinking.

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8.36.5 PROTECTING THE CRIME SCENE (CONTINUED)

- Smoking and/or chewing tobacco.
- Littering.
- Spitting.
- Using the telephone.
- Using the bathroom or restroom.
- Moving any items, including weapons, unless necessary for the safety and well-being of persons at the scene.
- Adjusting the thermostat or opening windows or doors.
- Touching anything unnecessarily. Officers should be cautious of handling evidence due to DNA crossover or contamination.
- Repositioning moved items.

The initial responding officers should document the following to preserve the integrity of a crime scene:

- List observations made at the crime scene, including the location of persons and items of interest.
- Note the conditions upon arrival (e.g., lights on/off, shades up/down, etc.).
- Record their actions and the actions of other persons who are present.
- Document all instances of scene alteration, regardless of how insignificant the event or item appears.

The officer may need to effect measures to preserve/protect evidence that may be lost or compromised due to environmental concerns (e.g., rain, snow, wind, sprinklers, etc.) and/or the presence or arrival of other responders (e.g., footsteps, tire tracks, etc.). Any measures taken to protect such evidence from destruction/contamination will also be documented.

Secondary Crime Scene: The secondary crime scene may consist of additional evidence outside of the scope of the primary crime scene. If a secondary crime scene is discovered, the initial responding officer will establish the same procedures used for the primary crime scene. Special attention should be granted if the scenes are in close proximity (e.g., blood trails, paths from one location to the next, etc.).

8.36.6 CONTROLLING PERSONS AT CRIME SCENES

The initial responding officer should prevent individuals from altering or destroying physical evidence, by restricting their movement, location, and activity. Officers will:

- Identify all individuals who are present.
- Secure and separate the suspect(s).
- Separate the witnesses.
- Remove bystanders from the scene after determining that the bystanders are not suspects or witnesses. Families and friends of persons who are involved may need to be controlled at the crime scene. Officers should show compassion while dealing with these individuals. If necessary, officers should request the assistance of the police chaplains to help with the family's emotional needs. For safety, a chaplain must remain within visual contact of an officer at all times and may request the accompaniment of an officer.

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8.36.6 CONTROLLING PERSONS AT CRIME SCENES (CONTINUED)

If witnesses attempt to leave or indicate that they must leave the scene prior to being interviewed by the lead investigator, officers will explain the importance of obtaining accurate and timely information. If the witness or bystander is still persistent about leaving, the officer will notify the lead investigator of the situation. The officer should attempt to obtain the following information for the lead investigator, prior to releasing the witness:

- Full name
- Address
- Identification (ID) number (e.g., Social Security Number (SSN) or driver's license number, etc.)
- Date of birth (DOB)
- Phone number(s)
- General description of the witness (e.g., clothing, hair color, height, weight, etc.)
- Any information relevant to the investigation

8.36.7 LEAD INVESTIGATOR (KACP 17.4)

The lead investigator may assume control of the scene from the initial responding officer after the initial responding officer has provided a detailed briefing regarding the incident and the crime scene. The initial responding officer may continue to assist the lead investigator, as needed or until relieved.

If the crime is determined to be a division-level case (e.g., burglary, felonious assault, theft, wanton endangerment, etc.), depending on the type of crime, the lead investigator may either be the initial responding officer, a division detective, or another officer who is designated to investigate the offense.

8.36.8 CRIME SCENE PROCESSING

Qualified personnel are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to process crime scenes (KACP 27.6).

Crime Scene Unit (KACP 27.1)

The Crime Scene Unit (CSU) will assist the lead investigator at a crime scene by photographing, preserving, collecting, processing, packaging, and transporting evidence which requires special handling, or testing, by the Kentucky State Police (KSP) Forensic Laboratory or another appropriate outside testing facility. This will be accomplished by using the established procedures found in the CSU Operations Manual, which is kept on file in the CSU. The crime scene will be photographed and/or videotaped per the criteria set forth in the CSU Operations Manual.

Materials and substances will be collected from a known source, whenever available, for submission to the appropriate laboratory for comparison with the physical evidence collected. The CSU will not be required to respond to a scene merely to transport and place evidence in the Evidence and Property Unit (EPU). The lead investigator, an officer, or a Police Report Technician (PRT) will remain on-scene while the CSU processes the scene.

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8.36.8 CRIME SCENE PROCESSING (CONTINUED)

If a vehicle is part of the crime scene and requires processing, the lead investigator will complete the Evidence Processing Request for Vehicles form (LMPD #04-00-0050). The vehicle will be taken to 701 West Ormsby Avenue for processing under the direction of CSU personnel.

The CSU will also be responsible for sketching, photographing, and/or video recording crime scenes. This will include all homicides and major crime scenes. Additionally, upon the request of the lead investigator, crime scenes may be laser-scanned.

CSU members will complete the Crime Scene Unit Report (LMPD #07-0001) and other applicable reports for all crime scenes processed.

Video Forensics and Analysis Squad

At the request of a supervisor, the Video Forensics and Analysis Squad (VFAS) will respond to selected crime scenes and perform the following function:

- Retrieve pre-recorded video or digital media for processing, only in instances where the CSU cannot retrieve the evidence due to advanced technology.

The VFAS will initially take the evidence for investigative examination purposes (e.g., video media, recorders, or surveillance equipment) from the scene. Once the evidence has been examined, it will be transported to the EPU by the VFAS examiner along with an Evidence Chain of Custody form (LMPD #04-04-0127).

Submission of Evidence to VFAS for Examination (KACP 27.5a-d)

Videotapes, DVDs, and cassette tapes will be transported to the CSU. An evidence envelope, Evidence Chain of Custody form, and VFAS Service Request form (LMPD #05-0020) will be completed by the officer or detective and attached to the evidence envelope. The evidence will be dropped in the evidence vault. Officers or detectives will be required to sign a log listing the date and time that they deposit the evidence. When the VFAS examiner removes evidence from the vault, they will initial the log with the date and time it was removed. This log will be kept by the VFAS. Upon completion of the examination of the evidence, the evidence will be placed in the EPU. The VFAS examiner will then send the receipt form to the lead investigator. A copy of the evidence form will remain in the VFAS Office.

Duplicating Tapes & DVDs

For any tapes or DVDs that need to be duplicated, officers and detectives will come to the forensics area and complete a VFAS Service Request form and an Evidence Chain of Custody form, if it is a criminal case. Officers and detectives will place all documentation into a regular envelope and drop it into the vault. They must state how many copies are needed as well as when the copies are needed. Upon completion, the lead investigator will be notified that the copies are ready to be picked up.

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8.36.9 RESPONSE GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC CRIMES/SITUATIONS

Suicides

The initial responding officer will not alter the scene, unless lifesaving measures or external threats exist.

- Hangings: Officers will only cut the victim down in order to save the victim's life. If this is necessary, officers are to cut between the securing point and the victim. Officers will refrain from cutting or undoing the knot around the victim or the securing point.
- Pills: Officers will refrain from moving or handling pills at a scene; however, EMS may need to obtain information from the pills or pill bottles to aid in the treatment of the victim.
- Weapons: If a weapon is used in the attempt or commission of a suicide and the weapon is not in the way of lifesaving measures, it will be left in its original state. If the weapon prevents the safe treatment of the victim, or if left unsecured will cause safety issues, the officer will secure the weapon, noting its original condition and location. When a weapon is involved, the CSU will determine when to use Gun Shot Residue (GSR) analysis and whether to bag the hands for further examination.

Death by Natural Causes

When death appears to have been caused by natural means, the scene will be handled as a homicide scene, until determined otherwise by the coroner.

Dying Declarations

Officers will attempt to obtain a dying declaration, whenever possible. The declaration should be recorded if the officer has access to a BWC, Mobile Video System (MVS), or tape recorder. The recorded declaration will be released to the lead investigator for evidentiary control.

Business Robberies

When arriving at a scene of a confirmed business robbery, the initial responding officers will:

- Obtain a detailed description of the suspect(s), including the weapon displayed or indicated.
- Advise other responding officers of the suspect's last known direction of travel.
- Request the assistance of support units (e.g., Canine Unit, Air Unit, etc.).
- Close the business to additional patrons by locking the doors.
- Request that all transactions be suspended with patrons who are currently in the establishment.
- Protect possible fingerprint evidence at the scene (e.g., counters, doors, merchandise, etc.).
- Inquire if a working video surveillance system is on the premises.

Sex Crimes

Special considerations will be granted to victims of sex crimes. Officers should show concern for the victim and their emotional state while trying to maintain evidence. The initial responding officers should be aware that the victim is the primary crime scene. Victims should be advised, but cannot be compelled, to not do any of the following (refer to SOP 8.50):

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8.36.9 RESPONSE GUIDELINES FOR SPECIFIC CRIMES/SITUATIONS (CONTINUED)

- Eat, drink, or smoke
- Wash or clean-up
- Change clothes
- Use the restroom

Officers are also prohibited from requiring victims of sexual offenses to submit to a polygraph examination as a requirement for pursuing the investigation or prosecution of the offense (refer to SOP 8.28).

Explosive Devices

Bomb Squad personnel will be in charge of a scene when explosives, hazardous devices, or military ordinances are located or in any situation where there is a post-blast investigation. Once all of the evidence has been collected and the scene is considered safe, the investigation will be turned over to the appropriate investigative unit. Incidents involving explosive devices typically require a response by either the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) or the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), where they become the lead investigative agency. When this is the case, the Homeland Security Unit (HSU) will serve as the departmental liaison with the involved federal agency. In addition to cooperating with the federal agency which is leading the investigation, the appropriate LMPD unit will also conduct a parallel, local investigation. If the explosive device causes a death or serious physical injury, the Homicide Unit will lead the follow-up investigation for the LMPD. In all other instances, the HSU will assume lead investigative responsibility. Bomb Squad personnel will coordinate with the lead investigator and assist in the identification and processing of evidence, identifying subjects who are responsible for criminal acts, and court preparation.

8.36.10 LABELING AND PACKAGING

For labeling and packaging requirements for evidence that is being entered into the EPU, members should reference the EPU Operations Manual for requirements. The EPU clerk can assist with this.