

## **BLOOMINGTON POLICE DEPARTMENT**

### **STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE**

#### **FIRST RESPONDER (GENERAL) ALL SCENES AND DEATH SCENE INVESTIGATIONS**

Reviewed by: Lt. Chad Wamsley	Effective Date: October 1, 1993
Authorized by: Chief Clay Wheeler	Revision Date: April 16, 2019

#### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this SOP is to ensure the safety and security of the initial responding officer(s), any and all victims, and the scene itself.

There are three major factors for a successful investigation of any scene, whether it be a crime scene or an accident scene. They are:

1. Admission or confession of offenders;
2. Statements and testimony of victims and witnesses; and
3. Information received through physical evidence.

#### **PROCEDURE**

##### **INITIAL RESPONSE**

The first officer to arrive at a scene should be considered the first responder and shall be in charge of the scene until properly relieved of that responsibility. A first responder may be relieved by a superior officer or by another officer whom has been designated to take charge of the scene by a supervisor with the authority to make such designation. Additionally, a first responder may request another officer to relieve him/her of first responder responsibilities due to the initial responder's lack of experience or training. In such case, the first responder shall notify his/her shift commander in writing of the reason he/she requested to be relieved of his/her responsibility. The shift commander shall arrange appropriate training for that officer to perform first responder duties competently.

When an officer(s) is dispatched to a scene, it is the responsibility of the responding officer(s) to be alert, making both mental and written notes, along with utilizing department issued digital recording equipment to document possible suspects, vehicles, and/or witnesses. Officers should communicate the route of their approach and all other pertinent information for strategic deployment.

##### **ARRIVAL AT THE SCENE**

The most important factor to be considered as the responding officer(s) arrives at the scene is self-protection. The officer(s) must first ensure that no personal harm can result from hidden suspects. At the scene of a major incident, the first officer arriving at the scene, whether dispatched or self-

initiated, will immediately notify dispatch of his/her arrival at the scene and will assume the responsibilities delegated to the first responder.

### **SECURING THE SCENE**

"Securing" a crime/accident scene is not the same as "protecting" the scene. They are separate but interrelated. A scene must be secured before it can be protected. You must first secure the scene by establishing perimeters of the scene. This function may require the use of additional manpower. Elimination of the potential danger from suspect(s) at the scene must be insured before the scene can be considered secure. Once the scene has been secured, or during the process of securing the scene, aid to victims can be rendered. Keep in mind that until it is safe for the officer to enter the scene, aid to victims should wait. Bloomington Fire Department Emergency Medical Services (EMS) will stage a short distance away when responding to a potentially dangerous scene. BPD Dispatch will notify responding officers that EMS is staging (per dispatch SOP PDS10). Once the scene has been secured and is safe for EMS to arrive, the first responding officer or scene commander will notify dispatch that the scene is "clear to approach". Only after notification will EMS enter the scene to begin medical treatment.

### **PROTECTING THE SCENE**

Upon the completion of securing the scene, the initial responder is responsible for protecting the scene from contamination. Access to the scene has to be controlled to the point that only authorized personnel enter the scene. The initial responder is in command of the scene until he/she is properly relieved. The initial responder is responsible for establishing a Crime Scene Log.

The Crime Scene Log is used to record the names, times and nature of business of all personnel who enter the scene. Once administrative control of the scene has been established, the officer in charge will delegate additional responsibility to supporting officers.

### **IDENTIFYING WITNESSES AND SUSPECTS**

The initial responding officer is charged with controlling the scene and for completing the initial report. Additional or supporting officers may be required to assist in obtaining names, addresses and information from witnesses, victims and possible suspects. All parties should be separated immediately and advised not to talk to each other; information should be obtained as soon as possible.

### **MAINTENANCE OF THE SCENE**

Maintaining control of the scene until the investigator or investigating team arrives is crucial. The initial responding officer shall ensure that physical evidence does not get tampered with or destroyed. When a scene involves injured parties, there will be intrusions by rescue personnel and probably by witnesses. Positions of evidence that has to be either moved or removed needs to be documented. The preferred method of documentation will be digital recording via BWC or issued recording devices. If that is not possible, the initial responder will be responsible for making either written notes and descriptions or possibly just mental notes. This information will need to be passed on to investigators and documented in a report.

### **ESTABLISHMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF COMMUNICATIONS**

The initial responder must maintain communication with the shift commander to ensure the flow of information is maintained and the proper action is being taken. If for some reason

communication is not being maintained by the initial responder, then an officer shall be designated, either by the initial responder or command, to assume this responsibility. All responding support officers shall make contact with this officer to ensure proper flow of communication.

### **RELIEF OF INITIAL RESPONDER**

Depending on what type of scene it may be, a Command staff officer will make the determination as to what support (investigative) unit(s) may be required. Based on which support unit(s) will be responding, proper relief will be determined, and the officer in-charge at the scene will be notified as to whom the proper relief will be.

### **DEATH SCENE INVESTIGATIONS**

When a body is found by a patrol officer, the duty of that officer is to notify his immediate supervisor of his findings. The officer shall secure the crime scene so evidence is not tampered with, handled or destroyed. It shall be the responsibility of the patrol officer to notify the on-duty supervisor of any biohazard(s) and to ensure other responding personnel are aware of the potential biohazard(s).

A supervisor will respond to the scene and make the determination if a full investigation is needed. If the responding supervisor deems no further investigation is needed, the body will be released to the coroner, funeral home, or other appropriate person(s).

If, however, the responding supervisor deems the involvement of CID personnel appropriate, the responding supervisor will make every attempt to notify the CID Commander or Sergeant through the CID callout roster. If the responding supervisor cannot notify the CID Commander or Sergeant, the responding supervisor is authorized to take necessary steps or actions to commence the investigation.

If the responding supervisor is unable to notify the CID Commander or Sergeant after a reasonable amount of time, the responding supervisor shall contact the Assistant Chief of Operations, or the Chief of Police to advise the administration of the situation.

CID personnel will respond and take charge of the scene. Cooperation and assistance will be given to CID by the patrol division.

The Coroner's Office will be notified by the Shift Supervisor or their assigned designee via dispatch. The duty of the officer in charge at the scene is to cooperate with the Coroner or their responding Deputy.

Scenes involving serious injury or death of infants and children shall be given exceptional scrutiny by the responding officer and the responding supervisor. If the injured infant or child has not died and is transported to the hospital for treatment and there is a reason to believe that the infant or child may not survive, CID personnel will be notified. If the injured infant or child has died, CID personnel will be notified. A CID Investigator and Crime Scene Technician will respond to the scene to document it in detail and to interview persons involved. CID personnel will coordinate the investigation with personnel from the McLean County Coroner's office. Additional CID personnel may respond if needed. The scene shall be secured by police personnel until properly

released by CID.

Death scenes wherein the deceased is a seemingly healthy person and the death has no obvious explanation shall be given exceptional scrutiny. The Supervisor responding will consult with CID personnel and the McLean County Coroner's office to determine the appropriate level of investigation for the death. The Supervisor will call additional personnel as needed and the scene will be secured by police personnel until properly released.

Death scenes wherein the deceased may have died from a drug overdose shall be given exceptional scrutiny. A CID Investigator and Crime Scene Technician will respond to the scene to document it in detail and to interview persons involved. CID personnel will coordinate the investigation with personnel from the McLean County Coroner's office. Additional CID personnel may respond if needed. The scene shall be secured by police personnel until properly released by CID.

Traffic related deaths will be handled according to the operating procedures for traffic crash investigations.

NOTE:

It is important for all parties involved to understand that not just any detective or accident investigator can be considered the proper relief. That person will be identified by Command Staff and the scene should only be turned over to that person.

Once the support unit arrives and takes control of the scene, it is the responsibility of the initial responder to relay all information to the officer in charge of the support unit. At this point, the initial responder may be relieved. There may be a need for a patrol officer(s) to remain on scene to maintain control during the investigation.

The initial responder is a vital part of any investigation. Therefore, upon relief from the scene, the initial responder is still responsible for completion of their report. As an essential part of the investigation, their report needs to be detailed, describing the scene as it was observed by the initial responder or as it was described to the initial responder, upon arrival.