

SI Identification Number	SI0616
Policy Ownership	Legacy and Justice
Issue Date	24/11/2016
Review Date	5 years from issue date
Governing Policy Directive	Police Investigations
Cancellation of	47/2004 Duties Of Personnel Attending A Serious Crime Scene
Classification	OFFICIAL [PUBLIC]

SI0616

Serious Crime Scenes



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1. Introduction

The aim of any scene examination is to maximise the recording and recovery of information and physical evidence so that the material recovered becomes an integral part of the investigation. The integrity of each scene and piece of evidence is a core objective.

- Authorised Professional Practice (APP) reference link - <http://www.app.college.police.uk/app-content/investigations/investigative-strategies/physical-evidence>
- Consider JESIP principles, multi-agency response to a major incident - [JESIP](#)
- Refer to [Death Investigation Service Instruction](#).

2. Initial Action by Police

Remember - preservation of life. At a scene involving death, life must be formally pronounced extinct (consider use of Forensic Medical Officer (FMO)). Assess threat, health and safety issues. Where death or life threatening injury is reported and circumstances are unexplained or suspicious, approach as a potential murder

until the evidence proves otherwise. **In cases of murder, a Senior Investigating Officer (SIO), Crime Operations Department, must be tasked to the scene.** Access to the scene must be on the direction of the SIO.

Identification of the Victim(s)

The identification of the victim(s) should be established, to allow for follow up actions. **Do not** search the victim's clothing for identification or move a body.

Protection of the Scene and Items of interest

Early control of a crime scene is fundamentally important to the subsequent detailed examination and the interpretation of any subsequent forensic findings. Access control is achieved through the use of cordons and a Scene Log Officer (SLO). It may be necessary on occasion to improvise a form of protection for identified evidence (e.g. clean plastic sheet to protect an item from rain). Actions taken in this regard should be recorded in a police officer's notebook. Any movement of items must be noted and the SIO informed.

3. Crime Scene Cordons

Resourcing for and placing of cordons, to restrict access into the scene is likely to be undertaken by the first police officers responding to the incident.

In general, within the confines of the outer cordon, there will be a smaller area focused on the identified physical evidence such as a body, abandoned vehicle/items etc. An inner cordon protecting this area of interest will enable its preservation and integrity.

4. Serious Crime Scene Log (Form 38/15)

Purpose - to record & account for the presence of personnel in the inner cordon area and relevant information.

Serious crime scene logs are original notes, must be marked as an exhibit and continuity maintained. An entry to this effect should be made in each SLO's notebook.

When the log is kept by more than one SLO, handovers should be shown including the time, date and police personnel involved (continuity section).

Only one log will be maintained for each scene. However, in the event of the full completion of the log, additional books can be used and identified as a continuation document of the original book and exhibit. A supervising officer may establish an Incident Control Point (ICP) adjacent to the outer cordon and will assume the role of Officer In Charge (OIC), for the security, control and protection of the scene and to give guidance and support to personnel. The OIC of the ICP will record their name, rank and number, signature and times responsible for management of the cordons and SLO in the 38/15 (final page).

All personnel entering the scene will be required to provide the following details to the SLO:

- Name/Rank/Grade/Number in block letters;
- Date/time of entry and departure;
- Reason for entry and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) worn;
- Signature.

All medical specialists entering a serious crime scene must wear full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE, described [here](#)). They must not take images (photographs) of the scene or deceased.

If a scene is closed and subsequently reopened, a new serious crime scene log should be commenced. Under no circumstances should a serious crime scene log from a nearby-connected scene be used.

5. Scene and Contamination Management

Crime Scene Examination and Management

The SIO has overall responsibility for the management of the investigation, including the forensic strategy. The SIO, after consultation, should agree an evidence recovery plan for each scene as part of the forensic strategy.

The SIO shall determine when the scene is to be closed and the log terminated. The final SLO who completes the log will note in an additional information page date, time and name/number of the officer authorising scene closure and hand the completed log personally to either the exhibits officer, or other person directly involved in the investigation (continuity).

Serious Crime Scene Notes

It is essential that police, scientific support personnel and other agencies performing duties at serious crime scenes maintain accurate contemporaneous records of their actions and decisions.

Contamination management

All personnel should bear in mind the potential of contamination and cross contamination within and between scenes (locations and people) and take steps to minimise same. Contamination may be an issue whenever (trace) materials such as fibres, explosives, firearms residues, body fluids, drugs, paint and glass etc. are involved. All personnel entering a serious crime scene should be prepared to provide, for elimination purposes - fingerprints, palmprints, buccal swab for DNA profiling and items such as footwear, as appropriate to the investigation.

Both uniformed response/specialist units attending the primary scene must not attend related scenes where there is a possibility of cross contamination. This should be managed by regional/local call management centres and supervising officers on duty.

When the availability of personnel is limited, the SIO/ Major Crime Forensic Adviser (MCFA) should ensure that the risk of potential cross contamination is considered and minimised.

Personal Protective Equipment

All personnel entering a serious crime scene will be required to wear PPE or clothing consistent with the nature and risks of the scene and examination requirements. As a guide, minimum PPE is currently defined as

- Disposable over-suit with hood,
- Face mask (without valve),
- Double disposable gloves,
- Disposable overshoes/boots.

Non-disposable equipment brought into a crime scene must be clean.

Personnel leaving the scene are required to dispose of all disposable protective clothing into a yellow coloured plastic waste bag for subsequent incineration by Transport Workshop staff.

Appendix A Definitions

For the purpose of this Service Instruction, a 'Serious Crime Scene' includes all murders, attempted and suspected, all suspicious deaths, and serious assaults, this list is not exclusive.

Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) is the individual in overall management/policy direction of a serious crime investigation, including the forensic strategy.

Major Crime Forensic Adviser (MCFA) is charged with coordinating the effective and efficient scientific/forensic support to an incident, the development and management of forensic strategy, liaison with scientists in Forensic Science Northern Ireland (FSNI) and other specialist forensic providers and acting on behalf of the SIO in relation to scientific support/forensic investigation matters.

Crime Scene Manager (CSM) can be a higher CSI, Area Forensic Manager (AFM) or MCFA. A CSM should only be deployed to a single crime scene. The CSM will act under the direction of the SIO/MCFA/AFM to ensure that forensic evidential opportunities are recognised, crime scene managed and forensic resources are used effectively and efficiently.

Scientific Support resources include Crime Scene Investigators (CSI) who provide the detailed examination of the scene for the identification, recording and recovery of potential evidence. Imaging branch provide specialist photographers and mappers.

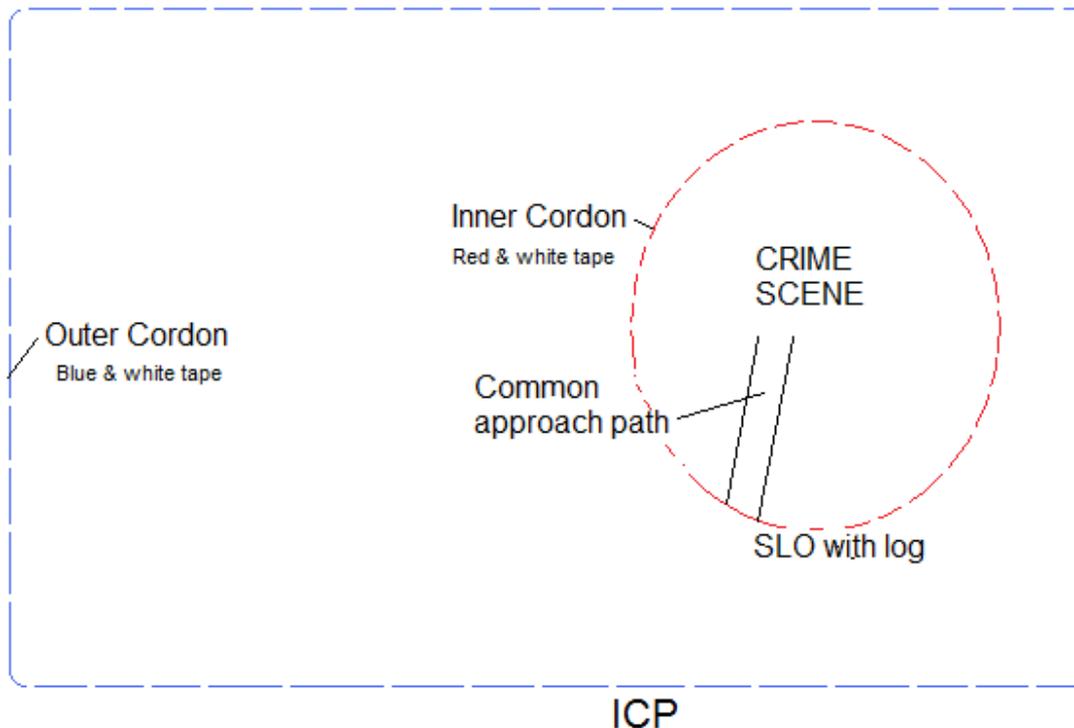
Area Forensic Manager (AFM). CSI manager. The AFM will have responsibility for the coordination of the scientific support response to serious crime scenes which are investigated at a District level.

Common approach path is the route/path to be used by all personnel to gain access to the crime scene within the inner cordon. The path should be chosen to minimise disturbance of the scene and any potential evidence. The path should be marked using tape or other indicators and searched for evidence before use.

Outer cordon is an area that Police wish to control due to one or all of the following factors (not exclusive) traffic/access control, geography, search parameters, threat, health or safety issues. It should be designated by blue and white police tape and/or natural/manmade barriers.

Inner cordon is the area that police have identified as a crime scene. The inner cordon should be designated by red and white police tape. A 38/15 serious crime scene log must be used by the designated scene log officer (SLO) at the start of the common approach path into the crime scene.

Appendix B Diagram of Theoretical Crime Scene



Summary of Key points

1. Preservation of life, followed by control of scene (consider threat/H&S), task SIO
2. Establish cordons (outer & inner), get resources to control access to scene (scene integrity)
3. Establish (if required) ICP
4. Resource SLO (with scene log – continuity), record all personnel entering/leaving inner cordon
5. Examine/search scene – evidence recovery plan & minimise contamination, part of forensic strategy
6. Plan for maintaining scene – welfare
7. Close scene – authorised by SIO or deputy

Appendix C Contact Us

Service Instruction Author

Head of Scientific Support Branch, Legacy & Justice Department

Branch Email

zScientificSupportSMT