



Seminole County Fire Department Training Standard

Revised 6/28/2012

TS-204

Crime Scene Preservation

This Training Standard provides guidelines for EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel to follow in order to assist law enforcement personnel and agencies in criminal investigations. *Concern for the preservation of evidence or the observation of crime scene details SHOULD NOT interfere with the provision of the best possible emergency medical care to injured persons or the efficient control of fires or other hazards.* Personnel must be careful that the information contained in this Training Standard is used in perspective to our primary mission of protecting life and property. *It shall also be understood that personnel safety is our primary concern* and that an accurate scene survey must be accomplished to insure that the scene is safe for entry.

EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel can assist in criminal investigations by:

1. Accurate observations of the scene and surrounding areas.
2. Preserving evidence whenever possible.
3. Making accurate records.

Observations of the Crime Scene

EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel should be alert for, and attempt to remember, significant details in regards to the following:

- I. General Observations
 - A. Were persons running away or driving away from the incident?
 - B. Were there any footprints or tracks?
 - C. Did witnesses or bystanders make any statements? Who was providing information or made the initial report to EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel?
 - D. Were there signs of forced entry?
 - E. How was the entry made into the property?
 - F. Who made entry first? Were tools used?
- II. Observations at Fire Scenes
 - A. Were there any persons among the bystanders that were familiar?
 - B. What was the physical condition of the property? (Rundown or well cared for?)
 - C. Was the structure occupied or vacant?
 - D. Was there evidence of missing furniture or personal-type contents such as photo albums, pictures, family valuables?
 - E. If a vehicle fire, was the battery, stereo, or other significant parts or accessories missing?
 - F. What was the type, odor and color of smoke?
 - G. Was there an explosion or unusual fire spread?
 - H. Were there multiple fires or multiple sources of ignition?
 - I. Were there window coverings to prevent observations from the outside?
 - J. What was the condition of the occupants? Calm? Evasive?
 - K. What kind of clothing were the occupants wearing? Were they "half-dressed?"
 - L. What was the location and position of any victims found?
 - M. Were sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers or other protective devices tampered with?

- N. Were doors propped open, holes cut in walls or ceilings, or any other structural faults present to allow unusual fire spread?
 - O. Were there suspicious containers, jars, cans or bottles, that may have contained flammable liquids or other accelerants?
- III. Observations at Scene of Crimes against Persons
- A. Did EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel see any weapons around the victims?
 - B. How were the victims lying? Face up or down?
 - C. Any shell casings scattered around the scene?
 - D. What did the wound look like? Any coloration around the wound?
 - E. Did EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel move anything like furniture to get to the victim?
 - F. What did victim's clothing look like? Was it torn or disheveled?
 - G. Did the patient have a wallet? Where was it located?
 - H. What was the arms/hand positioning of the victim?
 - I. What statements did the victim or bystanders/witnesses make?

Preservation of Evidence

EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel can do certain things to avoid disturbing the evidence at the scene:

1. Do not touch the telephone, doorknobs or other articles that may have fingerprints unless it is absolutely necessary.
2. Maintain one narrow path of travel between the outside and the patient's location. DO NOT walk unnecessarily all over the scene.
3. Avoid stepping on blood, fluids or other types of liquid pools on the ground, then walking all over spreading the material. Observe all body substance isolation procedures.
4. Do not place or lay equipment on blood or any liquid pools.
5. As appropriate, secure the scene's perimeter with scene tape and restrict all entry into the scene.
6. Limit the number of personnel in the crime scene to only the essential to do the work.
7. Avoid touching or moving weapons, except as necessary for self protection or medical treatment.
8. Avoid touching or moving containers that may have contained flammable liquids, accelerants, acids or other chemicals or poisons.
9. Maintain scene security and custody until relieved by the appropriate law enforcement agency.
10. At fire scenes, limit overhaul operations to those that are absolutely necessary prior to the arrival of an investigator.
11. If EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel have to move any weapons or handle other objects that may have fingerprint evidence, attempt to do so in a manner that would avoid destroying the fingerprint evidence.
12. If cutting clothing from the patient, do not cut through holes from stabbings, gunshot wounds or ripping buttons.
13. If possible, place clothing that was cut off in paper bags -- do not place in plastic bags as it may destroy the evidence within the clothing.

Recording Observations and Actions

EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel should make accurate personal notes concerning their observations and actions as soon as possible. These notes should be made individually to avoid subconsciously copying or changing the observations of one individual based on influences in hearing another's recollections.

The station supervisor should require personnel to individually write statements of their observations and recollections while the information is fresh on their minds. These statements may be kept with a copy of the run report for future reference. These notes may be necessary to guide the courtroom testimony of the individual under oath, which may

happen years into the future. Copies of these notes should also be made available to the appropriate law enforcement officers.

Performance Objective

The EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel shall properly identify the following:

1. The importance of good observations, evidence preservation, and record-keeping on crime scenes.
2. The primary consideration of the EMS/Fire/Rescue personnel at the scenes of crime.
3. Safety issues and insuring a safe scene before entry.
4. Tips that will insure the preservation of evidence for law enforcement agencies.