



ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDERS

SOP 1-35

Effective: 09/16/19 Review: 09/16/20 Replaces: 01/12/18

1-35 CRIME SCENE SPECIALISTS

Related SOP(s):

[5-5 Scientific Evidence Division](#)

[2-73 Submission of Evidence, Confiscated Property, and Found Items](#)

1-35-1 Purpose

It is the purpose of CSS to recognize, identify, and collect forensically significant evidence at crime scenes.

1-35-2 Policy

It is the policy of the Department to have the CSS Unit properly collect, preserve, and recognize evidence on a timely basis, following approved procedures. Procedures will be updated based on court decisions about rules of evidence, the latest technology available, and best practices.

1-35-3 Definition

A. Crime Scene Specialist (CSS)

A civilian employee charged with the responsibility of recognizing, collecting, and preserving all forensically significant evidence at crime scenes and the proper submission of that evidence to Scientific Evidence Division (SED) personnel for analysis.

1-35-4 Duties and Responsibilities

A. Lieutenant

1. The Crime Scene Investigations Section Lieutenant will report to the Commander of the SED.
2. The Crime Scene Investigations Section Lieutenant will have supervisory responsibility for the CSS supervisors, Property Crime Reporting Technician Supervisors, the Major Crime Scene Team Sergeant and the Photo Lab supervisor.

B. Supervisor



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1. The CSS supervisors will report directly to the Crime Scene Investigations Section Lieutenant.
2. The CSS supervisor's primary responsibility is to ensure the services delivered by the CSS are of the highest possible quality.
3. The CSS supervisors will maintain quality control by regularly monitoring their personnel.
 - a. Random inspections of evidence submitted by CSS to Evidence Unit.
 - i. Proper marking, initialing, and tagging.
 - ii. Proper packaging and preservation.
 - iii. Proper photograph quality and procedure.
 - b. A regular formal inspection of personnel, vehicles, and CSS equipment.
 - i. CSS and vehicles will be inspected monthly.
 - ii. Vehicle inspection forms will be forwarded to the Crime Scene Investigation Section Lieutenant each month.
 - iii. Repair and maintenance of CSS equipment will be coordinated through appropriate SED personnel.

C. Crime Scene Specialist

1. CSS members will work shift hours that fulfill the needs of the section to provide the most efficient coverage of calls on a citywide basis.
2. Duty hours will be flexible to meet the needs of the department.
3. CSS members will respond to violent crimes first, property crimes second, and administrative assignments third.
4. CSS members will respond to crime scenes involving the following, although not limited to:
 - a. Unexpected deaths unnatural in nature or serious injury calls;
 - b. Armed robberies;
 - c. Criminal sexual penetration crimes;
 - d. Discharge of duty weapon except for training purposes;
 - e. Fatal and serious injury crashes;
 - f. Domestic violence calls; and
 - g. As requested by Department personnel.



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5. Assist patrol officers or detectives from other units to identify crime characteristics or special circumstances that exist.
6. Assist other agencies on approval of the CSS supervisor.
7. Assist or train personnel in crime scene procedures.
8. Assist the Major Crime Scene Team at crime scenes as required.
9. Monitor radio calls while at crime scenes to assure availability in case of emergency situations.
10. If a Field Services Supervisor is unavailable, CSS will respond for the purpose of photographing the alleged injuries of all officers, suspects, and/or prisoners involved in resistance in any manner which would require a Level 1 use of force report.
11. CSS will maintain a monthly worksheet.
12. CSS will write reports on all CSS calls for service when evidence is collected. If evidence is not collected, the CSS will notify the officer taking the initial report to reference in his/her report that no evidence was collected. The CSS will also add remarks to their call indicating whether or not evidence was collected and what type of evidence.

1-35-5 Rules and Procedures

- A. CSS personnel will follow all guidelines in SOP - Collection, Submission, and Disposition of Evidence and Property.
- B. Use of Evidence Storage Lockers:
 1. Provide 24-hour evidence storage; evidence lockers are provided in the triage room of the Metropolitan Forensic Science Center (MFSC, "Crime Lab").
 2. CSS will fill out the evidence logbook also located in the MFSC triage room.
 3. All items of evidence, confiscated property, and found items will be placed in the triage room evidence lockers at the MFSC by the end of their shift.



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4. CSS collecting evidence, property, or found items will be held responsible for proper preservation and safeguarding of evidence until it has been turned into the MFSC triage room.
5. Only items of evidence that physically fit into the locker should be deposited.
6. To facilitate special needs during closed hours, the Communications Section will have a call-out list of Evidence personnel on-call.
7. Evidence deposited in the locker will be tagged properly.
8. CSS and Evidence Room personnel will complete the evidence log upon each deposit and retrieval of evidence from the locker.

C. Dispatching CSS

1. CSS will be dispatched to:
 - a. Homicides;
 - b. Unexpected or unnatural deaths; and
 - c. All felonies involving forensically significant evidence.
2. CSS calls (10-64) will be prioritized using the following guidelines:
 - a. Priority 6 - Violent crime resulting in great bodily injury or death and needed to determine if a Major Crime Scene Team (MCST) call-out is needed.
 - b. Priority 7 - Violent crime (aggravated battery) which will not result in an MCST call-out, suicides, suspicious unattended/unexpected deaths.
 - c. Priority 8 - Calls where an officer is standing by (use of force, recovered stolen vehicle, domestic violence, etc.).
 - d. Priority 8 - Photo call only or comments are left when an officer leaves the scene.
 - e. If there is only one CSS in service, that CSS will not be dispatched to a burglary call.
 - i. CSS should not be dispatched on primary calls if there is offender information.
 - ii. CSS should not be dispatched to any burglary where the possibility exists that an offender may still be present, the location has a direct hazard, or other unsafe situations exist.



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- f. CSS will not clear for lunch or log off if a 10-64 priority 6 or 7 call is holding unless cleared by their supervisor.
 - g. CSS will not log a lunch break during the last hour of their shift without supervisor approval.
3. When a CSS is dispatched to a call the CSS believes to be inappropriate; the CSS will try to resolve the matter through their chain of command.
 4. A CSS will notify the on-duty CSS supervisor or Sergeant by radio or cell phone on the nature of the following calls:
 - a. Homicide;
 - b. Suicide;
 - c. Shootings, stabbings;
 - d. Department personnel injured or killed;
 - e. A request for service by outside agencies;
 - f. Child abuse calls; and
 - g. Any call of a potentially sensational nature.

D. CSS Training

1. The CSS training program will expand the knowledge of evidence procedures in the areas of all of the forensic disciplines provided by the SED.
 2. Training will be implemented where needed to ensure a high level of expertise among CSS personnel.
 3. Supervisors assigned to the SED will identify areas where individual personnel need improvement to maintain the highest proficiency.
 4. Training will be implemented to improve skills as needed.
 5. SED personnel will provide on-the-job training as needed for individuals.
 6. Refresher courses will be provided to all CSS personnel as a means of maintaining overall proficiency.
- E. Due to the possibility of significant mental trauma caused by the investigation of violent crimes, CSS personnel shall attend a Behavioral Health Wellness appointment biannually.