



ALBUQUERQUE POLICE DEPARTMENT
GENERAL ORDERS

SOP 1-35 (Formerly 5-8)

Effective: 04/26/2023 Review: 04/26/2024 Replaces: 09/08/2021

1-35 CRIME SCENE SPECIALISTS UNIT

Related SOP(s), Form(s), Other Resource(s), and Rescinded Special Order(s):

A. Related SOP(s)

- [1-20 Behavioral Sciences Section \(Formerly 1-11 and 1-14\)](#)
- [1-87 Scientific Evidence Division \(Formerly 5-5\)](#)
- [2-7 Damage to Civilian Property \(Formerly 2-02\)](#)
- [2-57 Use of Force: Review and Investigation by Department Personnel](#)
- [2-73 Collection, Submission, and Disposition of Evidence and Property](#)
- [2-98 Gunshot Detection Procedure](#)
- [2-107 Use of Crime Scene Specialist \(CSS\) Unit](#)

B. Form(s)

- [PD 4201 Request for Forensic Service](#)
- [PD 4201B Chain of Custody for In-Person Transfers](#)
- [PD 4202 Laboratory Firearms Evidence Trace Request Form](#)
- [PD 4426 Permission to Search for Body Samples](#)

C. Other Resource(s)

Agreement between the City of Albuquerque and Local 3022 AFSCME, Council 18, AFL-CIO

D. Rescinded Special Order(s)

None

1-35-1 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide the Crime Scene Specialist (CSS) Unit with procedures on how to recognize, identify, and collect forensically-significant evidence at crime scenes.

1-35-2 Policy

It is the policy of the Albuquerque Police Department (Department) to have CSS Unit personnel properly collect, preserve, and submit forensically-significant evidence, confiscated property, and found items in a timely manner in accordance with Department Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

N/A 1-35-3 Definitions

A. Crime Scene Specialist (CSS)



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Professional staff who are responsible for recognizing, collecting, and preserving all forensically-significant evidence at crime scenes and properly submitting that evidence to Scientific Evidence Division (SED) personnel for analysis.

B. Life-threatening Injury

Any injury resulting in the loss of a major bodily organ or function, including, but not limited to, double amputation, quadriplegia, paraplegia, total blindness, the permanent loss of a sense (sight, smell, taste, etc.), and/or results in 80% or greater chance of death as established by the attending physician. The on-call SED supervisor has the authority to deviate from the parameters on a case by case basis.

C. Serious Crimes Call-Out

A serious crimes call-out is generated when an individual sustains a life-threatening injury.

7 1-35-4 **Duties and Responsibilities**

A. Criminalistics Investigations Section Lieutenant

1. The Lieutenant shall:

- a. Report to the Commander of the SED; and
- b. Have supervisory responsibility for the CSS Unit supervisors, Major Crime Scene Team (MCST) Sergeant, and the Forensic Photography Unit Supervisor.

B. Crime Scene Specialist Unit Supervisor

1. The CSS Unit supervisor shall:

- a. Report directly to the Criminalistics Investigations Section Lieutenant;
- b. Primarily be responsible for ensuring services delivered by the CSS Unit are of the highest possible quality;
- c. Maintain quality control by regularly monitoring their personnel;
- d. Conduct random inspections of evidence submitted by the CSS Unit to the Evidence/Disposition Unit to verify evidence:
 - i. Is properly marked, initialed, and tagged;
 - ii. Is properly packaged and preserved; and
 - iii. For photographs, are of high quality and follow the proper procedure.
- e. Conduct a monthly, formal inspection of CSS Unit personnel, vehicles, and CSS Unit equipment;
- f. Issue and maintain crime scene-specific property to CSS Unit personnel.
 - i. Repair and maintenance of CSS Unit equipment shall be coordinated through appropriate SED personnel.

6 C. Crime Scene Specialist (CSS)



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1. The CSS shall:
 - a. Collect evidence and process the crime scene that they are dispatched to, consistent with SOP Collection, Submission, and Disposition of Evidence and Property;
 - b. For Major Crime Scene Team (MCST) call-outs:
 - i. Assist the MCST at crime scenes, as requested; and
 - ii. Identify the inner crime scene perimeter and secure it with red crime scene tape.
 - c. Write Uniform Incident Reports and supplemental narrative reports on all CSS Unit calls for service when evidence is collected;
 - i. If evidence is not collected, notify sworn personnel who complete the Uniform Incident Report to reference in their report that no evidence was collected.
 - ii. The CSS Unit personnel shall also add remarks to their call in the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system indicating whether or not evidence was collected and what type of evidence.
 - d. Maintain a weekly and monthly worksheet;
 - e. Assist and train personnel in crime scene procedures;
 - f. Work shift hours that fulfill the needs of the section to provide the most efficient coverage of calls on a City-wide basis; and
 - g. Maintain flexible duty hours in order to meet the needs of the Department.

6 1-35-5 **Evidence Handling and Storage**

- A. CSS Unit personnel shall follow all procedures in SOP Collection, Submission, and Disposition of Evidence and Property.
 1. CSS Unit personnel are responsible for properly preserving and safeguarding evidence, confiscating property, and found items until they been turned into the Metropolitan Forensic Science Center (MFSC or "Crime Lab") triage room.
- B. Use of Crime Lab Evidence Storage Lockers

N/A

1. The CSS Unit evidence storage lockers are in the triage room of the MFSC or "Crime Lab."
2. The CSS shall:
 - a. Place all items of evidence, confiscated property, and found items in the triage room evidence storage lockers at the MFSC by the end of shift;
 - b. Immediately fill out the evidence storage locker logbook located in the MFSC triage room for each deposit or retrieval of evidence;
 - c. CSS Unit personnel shall deposit evidence in the evidence storage locker, which shall be tagged properly;



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- i. Only items of evidence that physically fit into the locker should be deposited. Any items that do not fit in the locker shall be placed in the triage room.
- d. When evidence is deposited and retrieved from the evidence storage locker, enter the item(s) into the evidence management system.
 - i. Evidence/Disposition Unit personnel shall assist CSS Unit personnel with entering item(s) into the evidence management system.
 - ii. To facilitate special needs during closed hours, Emergency Communications Center (ECC) personnel shall have a call-out list of Evidence/Disposition Unit personnel.

6 1-35-6 **Call Responsibility**

- A. Consistent with SOP Use of Crime Scene Specialist Unit, CSS Unit personnel shall be responsible for the following incidents:
1. The following high-priority calls:
 - a. Fatal vehicle crashes;
 - b. Juvenile calls with serious injury; and
 - c. Violent crimes resulting in death and/or life-threatening injuries.
 2. Unless there is an articulable reason for deviation, or as directed by an SED supervisor, the following calls should be dispatched in the listed order:
 - a. Serious injuries and life-threatening injuries;
 - b. All levels of use of force, including all shows of force. The CSS shall respond for the purpose of photographing:
 - i. Scene;
 - ii. Involved sworn personnel;
 - iii. Involved individual;
 - iv. Alleged injuries; or
 - v. Weapon, intermediate weapon system, and/or tool used.
 - c. Gunshot detection system follow-up canvasses, consistent with SOP Gunshot Detection Procedure;
 - d. Criminal sexual penetration crimes;
 - e. Unattended or unexpected deaths, including suspected overdoses that are unnatural in nature;
 - f. Juvenile calls without serious injury;
 - g. Suicides;
 - h. Domestic violence;
 - i. All felonies involving forensically-significant evidence, including armed robberies;
 - j. Property crimes;
 - i. Residential Burglary
 - ii. Commercial Burglary
 - iii. Auto Burglary



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- iv. The primary officer or their designee shall remain on scene until photographs of the items have been taken when there is damage to private property as consistent with SOP Damage to Civilian Property.
- k. Processing a warrant;
- l. Accidental discharges of Department-issued firearms and intermediate weapon systems, except for training purposes; and
- m. Photo call only or comments are left when an officer leaves the scene.
 - i. Any call as requested by the Chief of Police or their designee, or an SED supervisor. The CSS shall assist Field Services Bureau (FSB) sworn personnel, or detectives from other units, to identify crime characteristics or special circumstances that exist.
 - ii. The CSS shall assist other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies as approved by the CSS Unit supervisor.
- B. Department personnel should be aware that CSS Unit personnel shall respond to calls in order of priority.
- 6** C. CSS Unit personnel shall notify the on-duty CSS Unit supervisor or SED supervisor on the nature of the following calls:
 - 1. Homicides;
 - 2. Calls involving life-threatening injuries;
 - 3. Suicides;
 - 4. Shootings;
 - 5. Stabbings;
 - 6. Child abuse calls resulting life-threatening injury or death;
 - 7. All Department personnel (sworn and civilian) injured or killed;
 - 8. A request for service by outside agencies; or
 - 9. Any call that may be widely publicized.
- D. ECC personnel shall not dispatch CSS Unit personnel as primary on calls for service if the suspected individual might still be present, if the location has a direct hazard, or if other unsafe situations exist.
 - 1. When CSS Unit personnel are dispatched to a call they believe to be inappropriate, they shall try to resolve the matter through their chain of command.
- E. ECC personnel shall not dispatch a CSS to a call for service for a property crime if there is only one CSS in service.



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F. CSS Unit personnel shall not clear for lunch, log out of service, or log off of the CAD system if a high-priority CSS call is holding unless cleared by their supervisor.

7 1-35-7 **Training**

N/A A. The CSS Unit personnel training program shall expand the knowledge of evidence procedures in the areas of all of the forensic disciplines provided by the SED.

1. Training shall be implemented where needed to ensure a high level of expertise among CSS Unit personnel, and it shall be implemented to improve skills, as needed.

N/A 2. Refresher courses shall be provided to all CSS Unit personnel as a means of maintaining overall proficiency.

B. CSS Unit personnel shall assist and train Department personnel in crime scene procedures.

C. Supervisors assigned to SED shall identify areas where individual personnel need improvement to maintain the highest proficiency.

N/A D. Certified CSS Field Training Evaluation Program (FTEP) personnel shall provide on-the-job training for new CSS Unit personnel. Training shall be according to the CSS FTEP Training Manual.

1. SED personnel may assist with on-the-job training.

N/A 1-35-8 **Behavioral Sciences Section**

A. Due to the possibility of significant psychological trauma caused by the investigation of violent crimes, CSS Unit personnel may attend a Behavioral Sciences Section (BSS) appointment biannually, consistent with SOP Behavioral Sciences Section.