

# Crime scene manager roles and responsibilities

[Profession](#), [Manager](#)



According to the lecture on crime scene management SAPS 2006 the process of crime scene management is as follows. The different role players within the SAPS respond to the crime scene with due consideration personal safety, while at same time looking for potential evidence and possible suspects. The researcher wants to determine whether the role players from the components such as the visible policing, detectives and the Local Criminal Record Centre attended the murder crime scenes with the purpose of obtaining the required evidential material for linking suspects with the crime scene and for court purposes, further to determine whether such role players has the expertise to identify possible suspects at the murder scenes, SAPS (2006).

In terms of SAPS, DCLP (2006) and SAPS Policy Number 1 (2004) on crime scene management, the procedure in the crime scene of crime is as follows:

The first member to arrive at the crime scene will receive the crime scene from the members of the public and immediately take control of the scene and identify the injured victims. The first member will establish the command centre and act as Acting Commander for the Centre until the Official Commander is appointed. The Acting Commander will administers all the resources as required by the crime scene role-players examples of such resources are visible policing, Specialized units, Emergency services, Defence Force units etc and if the scope of the crime scene escalates (i. e) incident where public order policing or the task force is required, a major aircraft crash or any major operation), the command centre will further supported by the establishment of a field joint operational centre. The establish excess routes to the crime scene for control purpose.

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The first member will hand over the crime scene to the appointed crime scene manager on arrival who will be accompanied by the detectives and the crime scene technician and conduct a detail inspection to determine certain key aspects of the crime scene. The crime scene manager, the crime scene technician and the investigating officer will gain on the first walk through plan and agree on the crime scene investigation, processing strategy and methodology which they will follow.

The crime scene manager will appoints the investigating officer who will be the principal investigator and be responsible for the maintaining of the case docket, investigating officer to co-ordinates the investigating team and for the maintaining the investigation diary and keeping track of the whole process and the investigating team is responsible for information gathering and proceeds which the interviewing of witnesses and taking down statements (SAPS 2006).

The crime manager will also appoints the crime scene technician who will be the principal processing expert on the crime scene and evaluates the evidence possibilities and assembles the processing team with the correct skills to effectively process the crime scene. Crime scene technician will be supported by specialists available to assist the processing team on the crime; such specialists are provided by the Forensic Science Laboratory, Pathology, etc. The processing team will prepare a realistic visual representation of the scene to a court of law (SAPS 2006).

After the crime scene team has completed their activities in the crime scene, the crime scene manager will conducts a final walk - through of the scene,

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accompanied by the investigating officer and the crime scene technician. The purpose of walk-through is to review the activity of the investigation and processing team, ensuring that the original plan has been executed. The crime scene manager will conduct a debriefing with all role players as the last opportunity to collect any wrong decision made during the process and to ensure that all required actions have been performed. The crime scene manager will restore the crime scene and ensuring that all equipments has been removed and authorised the crime scene to be released to the public (SAPS 2006).

Sometime after the event the crime scene manager calls a meeting with all the relevant role players to evaluate the process for lessons learnt planning the on going investigation, commenced on successes and identify mistakes. Cox (2009) in her article, explains that in order to ensure that the evidence is protected, the first person at the crime scene should secure it with barriers and or crime scene tapes soon after arriving at the crime scene, in addition, some should act as security guard so that people who do not belong at the location are kept out of the crime scene.

According to Lee, Palmbach & Miller, (2001), the first responders to a crime scene are usually Police, Emergency Medical personnel or Fire Department personnel. Their actions at the scene are often the foundation for the successful resolution of the crime. These first responding Officers are also in many cases some of the individuals, who may, through the course of doing their job, inadvertently change or alter the crime scene from its original condition, Lee, et al (2001). They further emphasized that those persons

must do their job but they must always keep in mind that they will begin the process of linking the crime scene to the victim, the witness and ultimately, to the suspect. Any disruption of the crime scene may prevent the link to the suspect. The critical matters such as training, education, experience are all necessary for any potential first responder Lee et al, (2001).

The process to be followed according to Roland (2007) correspond with (SAPS 2006) in the sense that the first Officers to respond are responsible for the securing the crime scene and preserving it as they found it. This means ensuring that nothing is touched or moved so that any physical evidence is not compromised or contaminated, if there are victims displaying signs of life the Police will call a team of Paramedics to give on site assistance if they did not respond to the initial emergency call. The injured can then be removed to Hospital, but dead bodies need to be left as they were found since vital causes can be obtained from studying the position and condition of the victim. The senior investigating officer will begin by interviewing the officers who were first on the scene to get their initial impression of the location and the behaviour of those who were directly involved.

In a murder enquiry the suspects residence will require searching as well as the site where the body of the victim has been discovered. Team is led by a crime scene controller who answers to a superior the superior then reports to the investigating officer. When the crime scene is a house, an apartment, commercial building or vehicle all which can be sealed off and examined in the minutes detail and if murder or violent attack has occurred in one area of

a building . The whole property will be considered relevant to the case and will be scoured for clause.

When exterior location Police may have to extend the perimeter to includes vehicle tyre tracks, footprints and areas where there is a change of finding personal items, discarded cigarettes butts, a weapon or trace evidence which might have been snagged on undergrowth. It is a burial site for murder victims. There could be other makeshift graves in the area all in which will save to be excavates, photographed and combined for physical evidence. Exterior scene may also have to be isolated by a tent to protect evidence from the effects of whether and to exclude the prying eyes of curiosity seekers and media Roland (2007).

It is clear that the procedure for the first person to arrive at the scene of crime is to ensure that the crime is protected for potential evidence.

Cox(2009), Lee, et al (2001) and Roland (2007) support the (SAPS1 (2004) on crime scene management as well as the SAPS DCLP (2006).

Wayne, Patherick, Brent, Turvey, Claire & Ferguson (2010) indicates that particular attention should be given to determine if this is the only scene or whether there are secondary crime scenes that need to be located.

Investigators will have only a limited amount of time to work a crime site in its untouched state. The opportunity to permanently record the scene in its original state must not be lost, such records will not only be useful during an investigation but are also required for presentation at trial Wayne et al (2010).

Wayne et al (2010) has also stated that it is important that upon arrival at the scene investigators implement crime scene procedures, supervise uniform personnel and provide direction to the investigation to facilitate this. An investigative team should be nominated. This team should consist of an arresting officer, a corroborating officer, and an exhibit officer. This procedure is standard in most Police services for any major crime. The exhibits officer is responsible for protection and collection of exhibits, through to the examination of exhibits and their final production in court cases. The arresting officer and the corroborating officer are responsible for interaction with suspects and have final responsibility prosecuting the matter to trial. This team should be overseen by a senior Detective who has a broad management role in ensuring that a major incident room (MIR) or command post is established to support and manage investigative functions at the crime scene and also at later stages of the investigations Wayne et al (2010).

Furthermore Wayne et al (2010) elaborates the initial assessment stage of crime scene that the trained investigators should have control of the investigation and begin to identify possible witnesses and suspects they should begin this stage by evaluating physical evidence located with a view to assisting with suspect generation by prioritising the most evidence (e. g) DNA located at a scene is powerful evidence as compared to an un-identified item such as clothing). It is also at this point that the investigators should familiarise themselves with the victim by performing interviews with the victim if still alive, or alternatively by conducting a victim logy (or profile) if the victim is the deceased. The profile should include the history of the

victim, associates, criminal links, family and financial records. This step is important because the characteristics of a victim can provide links to possible suspects in particular, investigators may be able to draw inferences about the offenders motive, modus operandi, and signature's behaviour (Turvey, 1999). Having done this, the investigators should be able to know the information about the victim. Wayne et al (2010).

According to Wayne et al (2010) during the investigation stage the investigators undertake the most challenging work. At this point investigators must attempt to establish a motive for the crime, if this can be done, it must be accurate, then this information will greatly assist in reducing the suspect pool. Witness account also need to be closely examined at this stage and evaluated as to the assistance they can build a profile for the suspect. In this stage investigators should be ensuring that trained experts are evaluating all available physical evidence. Wayne et al (2010) further explain about the target stage of having carried out thorough examination of the crime scene, investigators need to build a profile for potential suspects from evidence available during the target stage. The investigators should then test the velocity of the evidence by seeking links between the suspect and the crime. All available evidence needs to be channelled into providing a nexus between the suspect and the victim, in relation to time, place and motive. It is at this point the investigators need to be fully conversant with the investigations gathered by investigators with regards to build a profile for potential suspects. The investigators should develop an investigative interview plan so that when the suspect is confronted, the investigators are clear of the direction and purpose of the



action or questioning that they undertake in the arrest stage, Wayne (et al 2010).

According to Jackson, Andrew and Jackson, Julie (2004) the duties of the first Police Officer attending and preservation of the crime scene is as follows:

Maintain the value of any physical evidence that may be present. Carry out an initial assessment of the scene. Deal with any emergencies (the overriding duty of the first officer attending is to preserve life, irrespective of whether crucial evidence is destroyed in the process). Call for assistance as necessary. Preserve the scene (unless it has been decided that physical evidence will not be recovered. Make an appropriate records of his or her assessment and actions (included in this times at which any key events took place, such as the first officer attending arrival at the scene and any estimated time of the incident that may be available from, for example, eyewitnesses. Communicate his or her assessment and actions to those who will take over the responsibility for the processing of the scene and or those responsible for the investigation of the case. Provide appropriate information about the processing of the case to those members of the public who are directly involved. The first officer attending the crime scene must during his or her initial assessment, ascertain whether any of the following are present or nearby. Injured persons victims.

Eyewitnesses (who should be kept separate from one another, by the first officer attending need to avoid conversation between the eye witnesses that could distort their memories of the incident). Suspects (who must be kept separate from each other and from witnesses) it should be borne in mind

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that seemingly innocent might, in fact be suspects in case. Further Jackson et al (2004) provides that any crime scene from which physical evidence is recovered and recorded, this process is also known as documenting the crime scene. This is done by making written notes that are augmented by photographs, video recordings and or sketches, as appropriate Jackson et al (2004).

Jackson et al (2004) also mentioned the following recording on the crime scene. There must be a record of each item of physical evidence recorded from the scene, detailing the identified of the person who recovered it, the time and date at which it was recorded, the exact location from which it was taken and a description of the item involved. A log of all images taken of the scene (whether by still photographing - conventional digital or video recording) describing for each images.

- The exact location of the camera operator
- The identity of the camera operator
- The direction in which the camera was pointed.
- The time and date at which it was captured.
- Any special lighting or other conditions used.
- Any special light or other condition used.
- The items and / or area of the scene from which the image was captured.
- A log of any sketches made of the scene.
- A detailed description of the surroundings of the crime scene.

A record of the conditions of whether and light that prevailed during the processing of the scene and a thorough description of the crime scene itself in the condition in which it was found prior to the removal of any physical evidence, including details or any features that might be of evidential worth (such as the location and condition of any likely points of the entry and or exits by the individuals involved in the incident). It is clear that on the crime scene the physical evidence needs to be protected for potential evidence. Wayne et al (2010) and Jackson et al (2004: 19) support to each other in terms of the process of crime scene management.

According to Savino, John, Brent and Turvey (2005) provides the information to be learned from the crime scene as follows:

- Investigators can experience the sights, smells and sound of the crime scene, as the victim and the offender perceived them.
- Investigators can experience the spatial relationship with the scene.
- Investigators can experience how open, or secluded the scene is, suggesting possible witnesses.
- Investigators can experience how accessible or hidden the scene is to those not from the area, suggesting possible suspect populations.
- Investigators can learn what kind of traffic (vehicle and pedestrian), residences or businesses are nearby, suggesting possible witnesses and suspect populations.
- Investigators can experience transfer evidence first hand, vegetation, soil, glass, fibres, and any other material that may have transferred on to the victim or offender may transfer on to them, providing examples of what to look for on suspect clothing or in suspect's vehicles.

- Investigators can walk victim and offender routes themselves, seeing the sight first hand, in order to discover additional witnesses and suspect population. This witnesses can include businesses with active surveillance camera that may have recorded some or all of the crime Savino et al (2005).

The attentive investigators may discover items of evidence previously thought lost and according to Savino and Turvey (2005) further elaborate the crime scene dos and don'ts that, locards exchange principle. Every contact result in a transfer of evidence contact between items in around and obliterate it. The investigator needs to be on the crime scene and have some contact with the evidence, as do Forensic personnel however, reasonable steps can be taken to minimize how much evidence is added, moved and obliterated consider the following guidelines.

Do not enter the crime scene until you have signed in on the crime scene security log. If there is not a security log, start one. The security log should contain name, agency, function, time in and out, and clothing description for later exclusionary purposes. One person should be assigned to maintain the log.

Make certain that someone is assigned to photograph the crime scene and surrounding areas. Part of this assignment involves maintaining a log of each roll of film and each item and location photograph.

Make certain that someone is assigned to sketch the crime scene. A rough sketch should be prepared at the scene showing measurements between items of evidence and spatial relationships within the scene. A final or “

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smooth" sketch is prepared later, based on notes, photos, and other information gathered from the scene (Lee).

Make certain that someone is assigned to maintain and evidence log.

Do not collect multiple items of evidence in one bag or under one evidence number. This provides for potential cross -contamination.

Wear disposable latex gloves at all times- this will help prevents the transfer of fingerprints, sweat, and other material from your bare hand on the scene.

Change gloves every time you touch a new item on the scene. This will help prevent cross-contamination between items at the same that you have touched.

Do not dispose gloves by carelessly discarding them in the scene. They could wind up in the crime scene photo obscuring evidence, or worse, somebody might collect them as evidence and run lab tests to determine their origin.

Do not touch everything in sight. When you touch an object, you may move it from it's original position or obliterate any evidence that may have been transferred to it's surface during the crime, such as a fingerprints or biological fluids containing valuable DNA.

Keep your hands in your pockets until they are needed.

Do not wonder aimlessly through the crime scene.

Do not touch, move or otherwise alter items of evidence before documenting them (photographs, measurements, etc)

Do not stage collection effort from furniture involved in the crime. Set up your equipments elsewhere, away from areas of potential evidence transfer.

Do not use the telephone on the scene. The offender may have used the phone. This evidence that should be seized and processed for fingerprints and other potential transfer evidence also, phone records should be checked for all incoming and outgoing local and long distance calls, as far back as possible.

Do not use the television and / VCR at the scene. The offender may have used them, examine buttons for latent prints. Also, cable TV records should be checked both authors have worked cases where the offender has watched TV and / or ordered pornographic movies while waiting for the victim to return home.

Do not use the bathroom. The offender may have the bathroom and may have lifted the toilet seat. The toilet should be seized and processed for fingerprints and other potential transfer evidence.

Do not smoke, smoking changes smells of the air and results in hot ashes that have the potential to contaminate, melt, or even burn /ignite potential evidence. It also results in discarded cigarettes butts that may be confused as evidence.

Do not eat into the crime scene and dropped food could contaminate or obliterate potential evidence.

Do not drink. This is destruction and will result in refuse that could find its way into the crime scene and get more potential collected as evidence, also spilled liquids could contaminate or obliterate potential evidence.

Do not spit, spitting results in the transfer of biological material into a crime scene.

Do not bring civilians to a crime scene. This kind of thing shows a lack of respect and professionalism, as well as introducing more potential transfer evidence into the scene and increasing the possibility that evidence may be carelessly contaminated or obliterated.

Do not allow your superiors or colleagues to be civilians to a crime scene.

Leave sealed containers sealed. Do not open sealed containers and sniff inside to determine the contents by odour. They may contain hazardous or toxic material such as anhydrous ammonia, a necessary ingredient, especially the eye, skin, and respiratory tract will cause dehydration, cell destruction, and severe chemical burns.

Do not touch pools of liquid in the crime scene. This is TV and movie behaviour done for dramatic effects to sell a scene, it has no place in real Forensic work. If you do not know what something is you think it is important follow the appropriate documentation and collection procedures and submit it to the LAB for analysis.

Do not taste anything at the crime scene. This is also TV behaviour done for dramatic effect to sell a scene, it has no place in real Forensic work.

Do not interview the victim in the place where the attack occurred. This is extremely insensitive and may erode the trust between the victim and the investigator, to say nothing for potentially re-traumatising the victim.

Do not leave the crime scene to get something to eat, play lotto, go back to the office, or work on something else, until you are done.

Make written notes of everyone in the crime scene and each person's role. That way you'll know whom to call later if you need statement.

Take written notes of everything in the crime scene that get your attention because " nothing is significant to record if it catches ones attention.

Do not lead a victim' family members from the crime scene through the area where there attack occurred unless there is no other way.

Supervisors in charged of the crime scene with reviewing the work of an investigative unit do well to note those issues during performance reviews. They should also measure to ensure that once this kind of mistakes are discovered, they are not related. This can be accomplished by training and by the example set by seasoned investigators. Ignorance of physical evidence and protocol usually starts at the top, with those in charge and finds its way down through the ranks. Savino et al (2005). It is evident that members who attended the crime scene must follow the information guidelines of Savino et al (2005).

According to Van Heerden (1982) the scene of crime can clarify, amongst others the following:



The position of the deceased body and of various objects in relation to the body, can for example be important indications of the case of death. This means that whether the death is as results of murder, suicide or accident. The direction from which criminal approached the scene of crime and the manner in which the scene was left. The method used to commit the crime. The identity of the victim. The identity of the offender and the nature of his involvement in the crime.

In view of the clarification as alluded by VAN HEERDEN (1982) it is important to illustrate how the potential evidence should be recognized, protected, recorded, collected and packaging, labelled or marked, submission for analysis, maintenance of chain of possession of presentation in court. Marais, Rooyen, Pretorius, De Beer, Smith and Mostert (1992) et al provides that the following legal requirements should be critical importance to the investigator.

Before physical evidence can be collected it must obviously be recognized. In a murder investigation one usually concentrates on the weapon or object that was used that caused the death. A search is also made here for blood, hair, fibres and tissue in an effort to connect the criminal with the crime scene. Case and common sense should be always prevail with due precaution not to destroy physical evidence that may exist and the guidelines offered in this regard that the scene should be observed in its entirety and notes made of the location of all obvious physical clues, points of entry and exit signs of location (struggle) and the size and share in the area should be restricted and care taken not to destroy or to disturb any

evidence during the examination, a suitable search method must be decided upon and during the search of an indoor scene. Special attention should be paid to fragile evidence that may be easily destroyed or contaminated.

Places or objects where latent fingerprints may be found and other physical clues to be examined by the experts later need to be seamed.

Comprehensive notes should also be made of all stains, spots, liquids and the like which could prove to have evidential value. The scene and surrounding areas must be demarcated off to ensure that valuable physical evidence is not destroyed or damaged by vehicles people or animals.