

OSAC 2022-N-0025 Standard for Initial Response at Scenes by Scene Investigators

*Crime Scene Investigation & Reconstruction Subcommittee
Scene Examination Scientific Area Committee
Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science*



Draft OSAC Proposed Standard

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Prepared by
Crime Scene Investigation & Reconstruction Subcommittee
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Foreword

This document provides standards for those who respond to scenes for the purpose of conducting field investigations in recognizing, preserving, documenting, and collecting items of potential evidentiary value. This document should be utilized in conjunction with local regulations to inform or augment applicable policies.

This document does not detail the actions taken by crime scene personnel during the course of their investigation or reconstruction of the scene. This document makes the distinction between the first responding law enforcement officer(s) at a scene and the response of the investigative personnel.

This document has been drafted by the Crime Scene Investigation and Reconstruction Subcommittee of the Organization of Scientific Area Committees (OSAC) for Forensic Science through a consensus process.

All hyperlinks and web addresses in this document are current as of the publication date of this standard.

This standard provides guidance on some safety issues but is not exhaustive. It is the responsibility of the appropriate agency to develop a full health and safety plan.

Keywords: *Crime scene, response, Crime Scene Investigator, scene investigator*

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Standard for Initial Response at Scenes by Scene Investigators

1 Scope

This document applies to the initial response of scene investigators, however named, but commonly referred to as crime scene investigator (CSI), who responds to a scene for the purpose of conducting field investigations and undertakes one or more of the following tasks in relation to scene investigation: document, search for, identify, collect, interpret, and preserve evidence. This document addresses the activities and actions required of a scene investigator when responding to a scene and the steps to be completed prior to conducting a scene search.

2 Normative References

ANSI/ASB Guiding Principles for Crime Scene Investigation and Reconstruction.

ANSI/ASB Standard for Initial Response at Scenes by Law Enforcement.

See Annex A, Bibliography, for informative references.

3 Terms and Definitions

For purposes of this document, the following definitions apply.

3.1 contamination

The undesirable introduction of a substance to an item at any point in the forensic process. Note: This includes undesirable transfer of a substance within an item or between items, also referred to as cross-contamination. (ISO 21043-1)

3.2 crime scene investigation CSI

A scene investigation that involves a potential criminal act.

3.3 crime scene investigator CSI

An individual, however named, who is responsible for performing elements of a scene investigation that involves a potential criminal act.

3.4 law enforcement officer (LEO)

Any public employee whose duties primarily involve enforcement or investigation of laws.

3.5

personal protection equipment (PPE)

Equipment worn to minimize exposure to a variety of hazards such as body-fluids, irritants, or contaminants. Examples of PPE: gloves, foot and eye protection, respirators, and full body suits.

3.6

scene

A place or object that is subject to and/or requires forensic examination. (ISO/FDIS 21043-1:2018[E])

NOTE: A crime scene is a common description of a scene where a presumed crime has been committed. The scene can be a person or an animal.

3.7

scene investigation

An examination of a scene to locate, document, collect, and preserve items of potential evidentiary value. [Guiding Principles]

3.8

scene investigator

An individual, however named, who is responsible for performing elements of scene investigation. [Guiding Principles]

3.9

scene preservation

The intentional act of refraining from any activity that may alter a scene or anything contained within the scene. [Guiding Principles]

3.10

staging area

An area designated to be used to contain and deploy resources and conduct briefings.

3.11

walk-through

An initial visual inspection of a crime scene.

4 Requirements

4.1 *ANSI/ASB Standard for Initial Response at Scenes by Law Enforcement* details the responsibilities of the initial responding law enforcement officers. The first responding scene investigator shall ascertain what steps were taken by the responding LEO to preserve the scene in order to maintain the integrity of the scene until designated crime scene personnel are able to respond. The scene investigator shall seek information regarding any actions taken and any known changes to the scene prior to the arrival of the scene investigators. Prior to arrival, if the LEO notifies the responding scene investigator that conditions exist in the scene that could compromise the integrity or value of evidence, the responding scene investigator shall advise the LEO what

mitigation, if any, should be performed. The scene investigator shall participate in a briefing with the responding LEO upon their arrival to the scene.

4.2 Arrival at Scene

4.2.1 The scene investigator(s) should obtain or have access to, at a minimum, the following information:

- a) The initial responding and primary LEO's names, agencies, agency identifications (e.g., badge number), and times of arrival.
- b) The primary authority for the scene (i.e. which agency is taking lead on the scene).
- c) The time of the original incident, if known.
- d) The conditions of the scene at the time of LEO's arrival.
- e) The size and extent of the scene including the existence of known secondary scene(s).
- f) How long the scene has been controlled and any information about access or interference with the scene prior to it being controlled.
- g) Any information regarding any alterations (e.g., items moved, disturbed, or removed) to the scene and any movement of items at the scene between the arrival of the initial responding LEO and the arrival of the scene investigator(s).
- h) Any information concerning hazards at the scene.
- i) Information from the LEO pertinent to executing the scene examination.

NOTE Attention should be taken to mitigate potentially illegitimate biasing information.

4.3 Safety Considerations

4.3.1 The scene investigator(s) shall take reasonable precautions to ensure their safety while minimizing changes to the scene. Mitigating actions shall include, but are not limited to:

- a) Ensuring the provision of designated personnel for scene security and personal safety for all present.
- b) Requesting assistance from appropriate personnel or agencies if hazards such as chemical, radiological, biological, animal, physical, or utility (e.g. electrical or gas) are suspected or discovered.

- c) Wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) at all times.
- d) Taking periodic breaks for rest and sustenance, especially if wearing PPE, when outdoors, or during long periods of time on scene.

4.4 Scene Containment and Control

4.4.1 The scene investigator(s) shall review the boundaries established by the initial responding LEO in order to determine whether the existing physical barriers are adequate or if alterations are required. The boundaries shall enclose the furthest, immediate physical evidence connected with the scene. Movement throughout the scene should be limited to essential scene investigation personnel only.

4.4.2 The agency controlling the scene shall establish documentation of all personnel entering or exiting the scene including the time of their arrival and departure and their reason for entry. Upon arrival, if such documentation has not been started, the scene investigator shall cause the process to begin. This log should not be the responsibility of those personnel tasked with processing the scene.

4.4.3 The scene investigator(s) shall ensure that a path for authorized personnel to enter and exit the scene has been established and is appropriate for the preservation of evidence integrity.

4.4.4 The scene investigator(s) shall ensure that a staging area is designated. The staging area may be located in any secured area (e.g., vehicle, trailer, tent, or within a building). The staging area should be positioned outside of present or potential hazard zones but close enough to the incident to maintain command and deploy response resources in an efficient manner.

4.4.5 The scene investigator(s) shall establish an area designated for trash, e.g. biohazards, other hazardous materials, and used supplies. If it is not practical to place this within the staging area, an area shall be carefully chosen within a confined portion of the scene. If this area is established within a scene, the scene investigator shall ensure the designated area has been documented, searched, and deemed safe to assume that role. All items secured therein shall be confined to the area, contained within an appropriate receptacle, and collected upon departure from the scene.

4.4.6 The scene investigator(s) shall establish a secure area on scene for the temporary storage of evidence following initial collection in accordance with preserving evidence integrity and chain of custody.

4.5 Legal Considerations

4.5.1 The scene investigator(s) shall conduct themselves with the expectation that their work may be used in every step of the legal process, and therefore shall ensure that they comply with applicable legal standards including those of search and seizure.

4.6 Assessing the Scene

4.6.1 The scene investigator shall conduct a preliminary scene evaluation that should include initial observations and information obtained from the responding LEO(s) to determine appropriate resources and response.

4.6.2 The scene investigator shall conduct a scene assessment (also known as a “walk-through”) using appropriate precautions, to obtain an overview of the entire scene, identify any hazards or threats to scene integrity, and ensure the protection of physical evidence, unless doing so would compromise safety or the potential evidence. The assessment should encompass time, conditions, life, property, personnel and any pertinent information relative to the incident.

4.6.3 The scene investigator shall use the scene assessment to develop a plan for the coordinated identification, collection, and preservation of evidence. The plan should be reassessed as appropriate to address such things as new information, changes in scene conditions, and new material located at the scene. This includes the consideration of the existence of multiple scenes.

- a) Measures shall be instituted to preserve and protect evidence that may be lost or compromised due to environmental conditions or the nature of the evidence item. Such measures may include prioritized collection or use of protective measures that also prevent contamination, tampering, alteration, or loss of evidence.
- b) There may be the need for immediate documentation and collection of evidence prior to the full completion of the scene assessment to prevent contamination, alteration, or loss of evidence.

4.6.4 The scene assessment shall also be used to determine the need for specialized reconstructive efforts or additional resources.

4.7 Documentation

4.7.1 The scene investigator(s) shall document all pertinent information and observations including but not limited to the conditions of the scene and the investigative steps taken, providing a permanent record.

4.8 Scene Processing

4.8.1 Information gathered during the initial scene response and assessment shall determine the actions taken by the scene investigator in processing the scene. The information-gathering, observation, and assessment processes are cyclical and shall be repeated and revised as necessary throughout the entirety of scene processing.

Annex A (informative)

Bibliography

1] National Forensic Science Technology Center. *Crime Scene Investigation: A Guide for Law Enforcement* [supported under cooperative agreements by BJA, NIJ, and NIST]. NFSTC, 2013. <https://www.nist.gov/sites/default/files/documents/forensics/Crime-Scene-Investigation.pdf>¹

2] Federal Bureau of Investigation. *Standard ERT 12-Step Process*. Undated.²

3] ISO 21043-1:2018(E) *Forensic sciences- Part 1: Terms and definitions*, 2018.³

4] ISO/FDIS 21043-2:2018(E) *Forensic sciences- Part 2: Recognition, recording, recovery, transport and storage of material*, 2018.⁴

¹ National Forensic Science Technology Center. 8285 Bryan Dairy Rd #125, Largo, FL 33777

² Federal Bureau of Investigation, 935 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20535

³ International Organization for Standardization, 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, Case postale 56, CH-1211 Geneva 20

⁴ International Organization for Standardization, 1, ch. de la Voie-Creuse, Case postale 56, CH-1211 Geneva 20