

Santa Clara County Sheriff's Office  
Evidence Collection – 4 hours  
2270-31552  
Revised 09/14/2020

**Course Objective:** The students in this course will receive instruction on how to perform a basic preliminary investigation as it relates to evidence collection for common patrol level incidents. The student will be provided with techniques, legal information, and resources to properly identify, collect, and document evidence.

**Learning Outcomes:** The students will demonstrate the importance of properly identify, collecting and documenting evidence out in the field. Learning outcomes will be validated through a practical exercise facilitated by the instructor in which the students will apply the learned material.

**I. Introduction**

- a. Instructor Introductions
- b. Course objectives and overview

**II. Types of Evidence**

- a. Testimonial
  - i. Oral, written, or recorded account received in court
- b. Real
  - i. Physical object
    - 1. Fruits of the crime, instrumentalities of the crime and contraband
- c. Demonstrative
  - i. Illustrates a matter of importance in a case
    - 1. Maps, model, re-enactments
- d. Circumstantial
  - i. Tends prove a fact in the case based on an inference

**III. Crime Scenes**

- a. Preliminary Investigations
  - i. Establish that a crime has occurred
- b. Why do we collect evidence?
  - i. Identify a suspect
  - ii. Link crimes together

**IV. Preservation of a Crime Scene**

- a. Initial Officer Responsibilities
  - i. Secure and protect integrity of the crime scene until properly relieved
  - ii. Do not touch anything
  - iii. Do not alter a crime scene in any way, exceptions:
    - 1. Preserve life
    - 2. Administer aid to a victim, suspect, officer

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**V. Contamination**

- a. Transfer theory

**VI. Protecting the crime scene**

- a. Establish a perimeter
  - i. Inner – should include that area which contains specific evidence of the crime
    - 1. Access should be limited to only those authorized individuals directly related to the criminal investigation
    - 2. Larger than is apparently necessary
      - a. Double the distance from the center of the crime scene to the furthest location of any piece of evidence
  - ii. Outer – may be established as a means of securing and controlling access to the inner perimeter
- b. Assign Personnel
- c. Place fixed barriers
- d. Maintain Crime Scene Log

**VII. Crime Scene Surveys and Searches**

- a. Initial Survey
  - i. Determine if it's a major scene
    - 1. Major scene defined by the need for specialized investigators and forensic personnel
- b. Crime scene search
  - i. Locate evidence that indicates a crime has taken place
  - ii. Identify individuals (witnesses, suspects, victims)
- c. Search patterns
  - i. Selecting a search pattern
    - 1. Location and configuration of crime scene
    - 2. Number of personnel available to assist
    - 3. Personal preference
  - ii. Documentation
    - 1. Items found should be documented in:
      - a. Officer's notes
      - b. Photographs
      - c. Crime scene diagrams
      - d. Original and supplemental reports
  - iii. Types of search patterns
    - 1. Line
    - 2. Quadrant
    - 3. Grid
    - 4. Spiral
    - 5. Wheel

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**VIII. Photographs**

- a. Why take photographs?
  - i. Visual record of the crime scene
  - ii. Court purposes
  - iii. Means to present fragile evidence
  - iv. Validates/negates statements made by suspect(s)/witnesses
- b. Types of photographs
  - i. Location
  - ii. Witnesses
  - iii. Evidence
  - iv. Close-ups
- c. General Guidelines for Photographs
  - i. Take photographs prior to conducting any detailed search for evidence
  - ii. Take numerous different types of photographs
  - iii. Use markers/scale measurements
  - iv. Use of tripod
  - v. Written log of photographs
    - 1. Do not rely on memory
  - vi. Avoid photographing extraneous persons

**IX. Crime Scene Sketches and Diagrams**

- a. Sketch
  - i. Definition
    - 1. Rough drawing created by an investigating officer at the crime scene
    - 2. Contains details and measurements
- b. Diagram
  - i. Definition
    - 1. Measured drawing showing the location of all important items
- c. When to use a sketch or diagram

**X. Evidence Collection**

- a. Common errors
- b. Precautions
  - i. Photograph prior to collection
  - ii. Taking detailed notes
  - iii. Proper protective equipment
- c. Perishable & fragile evidence
  - i. Identified first
  - ii. Collected first
  - iii. Examples include:
    - 1. Fingerprints

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2. Biological fluids, stains, DNA
  3. Gunshot residue
  4. Hairs and fibers
  5. Botanical materials
  6. Flammable liquids and accelerant
  7. Shoe, foot, or tire impressions
- d. Trace and Transfer Evidence
    - i. Trace – very small and usually cannot be seen with naked eye
    - ii. Transfer – transferred or passed when two objects come into contact with one another
  - e. Weather Conditions
    - i. Protect perishable evidence
    - ii. Prioritize items
  - f. Packaging Evidence
    - i. Paper bags
      1. Dry items
    - ii. Cardboard boxes
    - iii. Metal
      1. Chemicals
      2. Flammables
    - iv. Plastic
      1. Paper
      2. Small amounts of narcotics or drugs
      3. No wet items
  - g. Sealing evidence
    - i. Tape
    - ii. Initials, badge number, date
    - iii. Labels with case number and description of item
  - h. Chain of Custody
  - i. Submission of evidence
    - i. Agency policy

**XI. Fingerprints**

- a. Common locations
- b. Precautions
- c. Forms of fingerprints
  - i. Visible
  - ii. Plastic
  - iii. Latent
- d. Developing latent fingerprints
  - i. Nonporous surface
  - ii. Porous surface
- e. Lifting latent fingerprints
  - i. Fingerprint tape

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- ii. Preassembled lifter
- f. Fingerprint cards
  - i. Documentation written on it
    - 1. Time, location, officer, sketch
- g. Packaging of fingerprints
  - i. Envelope
  - ii. Agency policy

**Learning Activity: The students will be provided with different surfaces that they will need to develop latent fingerprints.**

## **XII. DNA Collection**

- a. What is DNA?
- b. Types of DNA collected
  - i. Blood
  - ii. Semen
  - iii. Vaginal secretions
  - iv. Saliva, perspiration, urine, or other biological fluids
- c. Collection of fluids and stains
  - i. Safety precautions (PPE)
  - ii. Document location and appearance
  - iii. Collect stained items or portion of the item
    - 1. If item cannot be collected:
      - a. Swabbing
      - b. Scrapping
  - iv. Proper way to collect DNA evidence
    - 1. Instructor led demonstration
  - v. Proper package container
- d. Control/known standard
  - i. When is it needed?
  - ii. Reference sample of victims or suspects

**Learning Activity: The students will be provided with different surfaces that they will need to swab for DNA.**

## **XIII. Firearms and Ammunition**

- a. Document status of the item when located
- b. Photograph
- c. Proper PPE
- d. Note the condition of firearm prior to rendering it safe
  - i. Semi-automatic v. revolver
- e. Packaging

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**XIV. Collection of Clothing**

- a. Collection
  - i. Proper PPE
- b. Photograph
- c. Individually collected and packaged
- d. Collection of wet clothing must be dried first

**XV. Bite Marks and Bruises**

- a. Photograph area
- b. Swab area for DNA

**XVI. Controlled Substances**

- a. Photograph
- b. Weight
- c. Package

**XVII. Current Evidence Trends**

- a. What evidence does the Crime Lab not process?
- b. Type of crime v. type of DNA request

**XVIII. Report Writing Requirements**

- a. Description of items recovered
- b. Time, date, location
- c. Measurements, if applicable
- d. Actions by officers
- e. Agency policy

**XIX. REQUIRED LEARNING ACTIVITY - Scenario / Practical Exercises**

- a. Safety briefing
- b. Students will be broken down into small teams
- c. Students will be presented with a scenario that will require them to:
  - i. Photograph the scene
  - ii. Lift fingerprints
  - iii. Collect DNA
  - iv. Collect clothing
  - v. Take measurements
  - vi. Evidence Log

**XX. Closing**

- a. Questions
- b. Course Evaluations