Crime scene processing involves taking steps to ensure the methodical and lawful collection of information and evidence at a crime scene. Proper processing aids in the reconstruction of a crime and assists in the admissibility of evidence for court proceedings. Presented in this unit are investigations in which you will learn the steps used in processing a crime scene, the proper procedures for packaging evidence such as cartridge casings, fibers and bloody fabric, how to differentiate between and create rough and final sketches of a crime scene and develop an understanding of the chain of custody of evidence.
Section A — Crime Scene Processing Notes

• Crime scene processing involves taking steps to ensure the methodical and lawful collection of information and evidence at a crime scene.

• Proper processing aids in the reconstruction of a crime and assists in the admissibility of evidence for court proceedings.

The following steps are taken by Investigators when processing a crime scene:

1. Provide medical attention to injured persons. *

2. Secure the scene. *

3. Interview witnesses. *

4. Photograph the scene.

5. Record notes.

6. Sketch the scene.

7. Conduct a search.

8. Collect and package evidence.

* Steps 1, 2 and 3 are performed simultaneously as there is typically more than one investigator present.
If there is just one investigator present then the priority is to provide medical attention.

Overview of Steps

1. Provide medical attention to injured persons.

2. Secure the scene.

   a. This is the responsibility of the first officers that arrive at the scene.

   b. Post tapes, ropes and barricades around the perimeter of the scene.

   c. Exclude people who are not directly involved in the investigation. This avoids possible tampering of evidence.

   d. Record the names of all people involved.
3. Interview witnesses.

a. Record the following information in a notepad:
   (Use the witness question sheet to help)
   - Name of witness
   - Date of occurrence
   - Location
   - Give an account of the events of the crime.

b. Remember, witnesses can:
   - Provide answers to questions to help investigators reconstruct the crime.
   - Help corroborate information about the crime.
     (Ex. Confirm or support facts that have come from other sources).
   - Provide information about the crime that evidence alone cannot.
     (Ex. Details about the activities of the victim or suspects).

4. Photograph the scene.

a. Start with close up shots of significant aspects of the scene
   (use a ruler in all photographs for scale)
   (Ex. a broken window, overturned table, drawers pulled from a desk.)

b. Next, photograph key pieces of evidence.
   (Ex. A suspected weapon, bloody fingerprint, stained clothing.)

c. Lastly, take various photographs of the entire scene from wide angles.

5. Record notes.

a. Notes should include:
   1. A detailed description of the scene. (Notes serve to refresh Investigators’ memories months or years after the crime.)

   2. Information that cannot be captured by photographs or included in sketches. Ex. unusual odor, time, weather, lighting.

   3. Information about how and when pieces of evidence were collected and who collected the evidence.

b. Crime scene details can also be documented via a narrated videotape or tape recording. Both allow for more detailed notes and must be transcribed into a written document.
6a. Sketch the scene — Rough Sketch.

1. Initial sketch of the scene that does not have to be neat and must be as detailed as possible. (Serves to refresh the memories of Investigators months or years after the crime)
2. Should include the following:
   a. “Fixed Points” - objects or locations that help provide scale in the sketch and represent points from which the distance of all important details in the scene can be measured. The Investigator can create a “fixed” point by drawing a line from which measurements can be taken (see sketch).
   b. Labels on items in sketch. (Ex. doors, windows, pieces of evidence)
   c. Accurate dimensions of objects in, and aspects of, the scene. (Ex. pieces of furniture/windows)
   d. Case information including, date, time and location of crime, case number, and name of sketcher.
   e. Compass direction, North.

Example: Rough Sketch
6b. Sketch the scene — Final Sketch.

1. The official sketch needs to be as clean in appearance as possible. It is used during court proceedings for jury viewing. It is imperative that the jury can read it easily and have no confusion. If a dimension is needed during court testimony, the investigator will refer to his/her rough sketch.

2. Should omit the following:
   a. Lines and numbers denoting dimensions
   b. Labels

3. Should include the following:
   a. Numbers denoting objects and pieces of evidence
   b. A legend reflecting the identification of the numbered items
   c. Scale
   d. Compass direction, North
   e. A label showing, case number, date, time, location, name of sketcher.

4. Can be created via computerized sketching.

Example: Final Sketch
6c. Sketch the scene — Two-dimensional sketch (Cross - Projection Sketch).

1. Incorporates walls and ceiling to reflect evidence, such as blood spatter, that may be present.

Example: Two Dimensional Sketch

Case No. NY-135
Date 31 Dec 06
Time 1600hr
Location 10 Wats St.
Sketcher: P/O F.Kurt

Legend
1 Body
2 Table
3 Couch
4,5,6,7 Blood
8 Knife
9 Loveseat
10 Chair
Section A — Crime Scene Processing Notes

7. Conduct a search.

a. Searching a scene allows for the following to be determined:
   1. Perpetrator’s path of entry and exit.
   2. Locations of pieces of evidence.

b. Examples of search patterns include:
   1. Line, Grid and Spiral that are typically used when searching large areas such as fields.
   2. Quadrant which is typically used when searching small areas such as a room.
   (Note: The Spiral search method may also be used when searching a small area.)

Example Search Patterns

[Diagram of search patterns: Line, Grid, Spiral, Quadrant]
8. Collect and package evidence.

Proper collection and packaging helps to protect the evidence and ensure its integrity.

a. Investigators should wear gloves and use forceps when necessary.
b. Each item of evidence should be marked with the date and the Investigator’s initials and packaged separately.
c. The type of packaging is dependent on the nature of the evidence. The following are some examples of evidence and the types of packaging they require:

- **Bullet/casing** – Cardboard box or envelope
- **Powdered material (Ex. drug/poison)** – Plastic bag
- **Arson evidence (Ex. A piece of carpet soaked with gasoline)**
  - Air tight container such as Mason jar or paint can
- **Piece of glass** – Plastic vial
- **Item stained with biological fluid such as blood** – Paper container
  (allows the circulation of air thus preventing bacterial growth)
- **Matches** – Metal container
- **Hair/Fiber** – Paper envelope
- **Document** – Paper envelope slightly larger in size

d. Each piece of packaged evidence should display a label that reflects the following pieces of information:
   - Case number
   - Exhibit number
   - Date of collection
   - Location collected from
   - Name of person who collected evidence
   - Description of evidence (If the package is opaque)
9. Chain of Custody

Proper completion of evidence labels plays an important part in the “Chain of Custody” of a piece of evidence.

Chain of Custody is a process that incorporates documentation of the “Who,” “When” and “Where” of a piece of evidence from its initial collection to its final disposition (i.e. destruction/storage).

Chain of Custody is a fundamental step that is crucial in maintaining the integrity of evidence and an investigation.

A disruption in the Chain of Custody (i.e. improper labeling, sealing or storage) could result in the inadmissibility of evidence during court proceedings.
Section 1 — Investigation: Crime Scene Processing

Name__________________________Date________________Class________________

Objective:

To determine the proper sequence of steps for evaluating and processing a crime scene.

Background:

- Crime scene processing involves taking steps to ensure the methodical and lawful collection of information and evidence at a crime scene.

- Proper processing aids in the reconstruction of a crime and assists in the admissibility of evidence for court proceedings.

The following represent steps (not in order) that are taken by investigators when processing a crime scene:

- Collecting evidence
- Sketching the scene
- Searching for evidence
- Providing medical attention to injured persons
- Photographing the scene
- Recording notes
- Securing the scene
- Interviewing witnesses

Materials:

One large plastic bag containing the following items:

- Film canister
- Graph paper with measuring tape
- Memo book
- “Witness Question” sheet
- Search pattern card
- Evidence bag
- Bandaging material
- “Crime Scene” tape

This investigation should precede notes on Crime Scene Processing.

Investigation Prep:

- For master copies of: “Search Pattern card”, “Witness Information sheet” see later in this section.

- “Evidence Bags” can be purchased through science catalogues.

- Reclosable sandwich bags can be used in place of “Evidence Bags”.

- Use one large “Evidence Bag” or a reclosable sandwich bag to hold the items listed under “Materials.”

- Used film canisters can be obtained from film developing centers.

- “Crime Scene” tape can be purchased through science catalogues.

- “Caution” tape can be used in place of “Crime Scene” tape and can be purchased at a hardware store.

- “Bandaging Material” can consist of a band-aid or a piece of gauze.

- Measuring tapes can be purchased through science catalogues or fabric supply stores.

- Small memo books should be used.
Procedure:

1. Read the following “Crime Scene” scenario:

   On Wednesday evening, the next-door neighbor of Mr. Tom Livingston called the police to report the sound of gunshots. When the police arrived at Mr. Livingston’s apartment they found the following in the bedroom of his residence: a piece of torn bloody fabric, two 9mm casings, muddy shoe prints and Mr. Livingston with a gunshot wound to his right thigh.

2. Empty the contents of the plastic bag onto your work area.

3. Each item symbolizes a step in crime scene processing. Using the crime scene scenario and the list of steps outlined under the “Background” information, determine which step each item symbolizes. Write your answers in Data Table I.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Step</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Film canister</td>
<td>Ex. Photograph the scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graph paper with measuring tape</td>
<td>Sketching the scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crime Scene tape</td>
<td>Securing the scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memo book</td>
<td>Recording notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Witness Question” sheet</td>
<td>Interviewing witnesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Search Pattern” card</td>
<td>Searching for evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bandaging material</td>
<td>Providing medical attention to injured persons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence bag</td>
<td>Collecting Evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. Using the “Background” information, the “Crime Scene” scenario, and your data from Data Table I, discuss with your partner what you think the logical sequence of steps is for processing a crime scene.

5. On your work area, place the items from the plastic bag in the order that you feel represents the proper sequence of steps for processing a crime scene.

6. When you are finished, ask your teacher to check your work.
7. Record these steps in Data Table II.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Table II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steps for Processing a Crime Scene</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. <em>Provide medical attention to injured persons</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Secure the scene</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Interview witnesses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Photograph the scene</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Record notes</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Sketch the scene</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. <em>Search the scene for evidence</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. <em>Collect evidence</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: The order of Steps 1-3 can vary. Steps 1, 2, and 3 are performed simultaneously as there is typically more than one “first on the scene” Investigator that responds to the crime scene.
## Section 1 — Investigation: Crime Scene Processing

### Follow-Up Questions:

1. Often, people think that as long as pictures of a crime scene are taken, they do not have to take notes or make a sketch of the scene.
   a. Do you agree or disagree with the above statement?
   b. Explain your answer.

2. List three reasons why you think it is important to cordon off a crime scene with “Crime Scene” tape.

3. List at least three pieces of information that you would include on the label of a bag containing a piece of evidence that you collected from a crime scene.

4. Explain what role you think witnesses play at the scene of a crime.

5. One of the items contained in the plastic bag is a “Search Pattern” card outlining the following patterns, “Spiral,” “Quadrant,” “Line,” and “Grid,” that are implemented by Investigators when searching crime scenes for evidence.
   a. Which two search patterns do you think would be helpful when searching a large area such as an open field?
   b. Explain your answer.
   c. Which two search patterns do you think would be helpful when searching a small area such as Mr. Livingston’s bedroom?
   d. Explain your answer.

### Exercise Answers:

1a. Disagree
1b. Film/photographs can be ruined during processing.
   - Notes and sketches can include information/items that may not be captured by photographs.

2. Answers may include, but are not limited to:
   - To keep unwanted people out.
   - To prevent tampering of evidence.
   - To set specific boundaries for evidence searching/collecting.
   - To prevent theft of evidence.
   - To prevent the addition of evidence.

3. • Case number.
   • Date.
   • Location where evidence was collected.
   • Name of person collecting evidence.
   • Brief description of evidence.

4. Answers may include, but are not limited to:
   - Witnesses can provide answers to questions that can aid Investigators in their reconstruction of the crime.
   - Witnesses can help corroborate information regarding the crime.
   - Witnesses can provide information about the scene or victim(s) that evidence alone cannot. (Ex. The comings and goings of the victim(s)).

5a. “Line” and “Grid”
5b. A large area would require multiple people
5c. “Quadrant” and “Spiral”
5d. A small area would require fewer people so as to avoid confusion/repetition
Section 1 — Investigation: Crime Scene Processing

Search Pattern Card

**Line**

**Grid**

**Spiral**

**Quadrant**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>II</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Section 1 — Investigation: Crime Scene Processing

## Witness Information Sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name:</th>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phone Number:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location of incident:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of incident:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Account of events:</th>
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<tbody>
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</table>
Section 5 — Investigation: 
Defining Chain of Custody for a Piece of Evidence

This activity is designed to encourage the students to develop their own definition and understanding of the “Chain of Custody” of evidence.

Materials:

- “Evidence Record”
- 5 name tags with the following titles: “Group Supervisor”, “Suspect”, “Forensic Chemist”, “Evidence Custodian”, and “Police Officer.” *
- One large plastic bag with a label marked, “Evidence”
- One small plastic bag containing a white powder

* Note: The following props can be used in place of name tags:
- Neck tie = Group Supervisor
- The plastic bag containing white powder = Suspect
- Lab coat and/or safety glasses = Forensic Chemist
- A colored copy of the “Evidence Record” = Evidence Custodian
- Toy badge = Police Officer

TPS Teacher Tip

This investigation should precede notes on chain of custody.

Procedure:

1. “Evidence Record” to the class.

2. Assign the following roles to five different students, “Group Supervisor”, “Suspect”, “Forensic Chemist”, “Evidence Custodian”, “Police Officer.”
   (Have the students use the appropriate name tags or prop.)

3. Read the “Drug Seizure” scenario aloud. Substitute the name of each student playing each role for “name” after each title.

4. As the scenario is read, have the assigned students act out their roles. (Ex. when the scenario reads, “Police Officer (name) seizes one bag…from suspect (name)…,” the student acting as the Police Officer should walk over to the suspect…)

5. As each step of the scenario is read, complete the “Evidence Record” with the entire class. (see sample)

6. At the end of the scenario, after the “Evidence Record” has been completed, ask the students what they think is meant by “Chain of Custody” and write the definition on the bottom of the “Evidence Record.”
### Scenario: “Drug Seizure”

- On (Date: Use date of activity), Police Officer (name) seizes one bag of suspected cocaine hydrochloride from Suspect (name). P/O (name) seals the bag of suspected cocaine hydrochloride in an evidence bag, labeled “Exhibit 1” and transports it to the Crime Laboratory for analysis.

- Upon arrival at the laboratory, P/O (name) submits the evidence to Evidence Custodian (name) who logs in and files the evidence in the vault, pending analysis.

- On (Date: 2 days after above date), Forensic Chemist (name) signs out Exhibit #1 from Evidence Custodian (name) for analysis.

- Upon completion of analysis on (same date as above), Forensic Chemist (name) returns Exhibit #1 to Evidence Custodian (name), who files the evidence, pending its use during the trial of suspect (name).

- On (Date: 3 months from above date), Police Officer (name) signs out Exhibit #1 from Evidence Custodian (name) and transports it to the courthouse to be used in the trial of Suspect (name).

- After using Exhibit #1 during his/ her testimony at the trial of suspect (name), (Suspect (name) is found guilty of possession of a controlled substance with intent to sell!), P/O (name) transports Exhibit #1 back to the Crime laboratory and submits it to Evidence Custodian (name). The evidence remains in the evidence vault pending destruction.

- On (Date: One year from trial date) after receiving authorization from P/ O (name) to destroy Exhibit #1, Group Supervisor (name) signs out the evidence from Evidence Custodian (name) to prepare it for destruction.
## Section 5 — Investigation: Defining Chain of Custody for a Piece of Evidence

### Evidence Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Case Number</th>
<th>Exhibit Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NYPD</td>
<td>NY-145</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>From</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26Jun05</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
<td>P/O Smith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Description of Evidence**

One (1) small plastic bag containing white powder

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Received by</th>
<th>Received from</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Received by</th>
<th>Received from</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>26Jun05</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
<td>P/O Smith</td>
<td>26Sep05</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
<td>P/O Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28Jun05</td>
<td>F/C Brody</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
<td>26Sep06</td>
<td>G/S Dodge</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28Jun05</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
<td>F/C Brody</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26Sep05*</td>
<td>P/O Smith</td>
<td>E/C Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Court
** Destruction

### Key

- **E/C** = Evidence Custodian
- **P/O** = Police Officer
- **F/C** = Forensic Chemist
- **G/S** = Group Supervisor

### Chain of Custody

The documentation of the “Who”, “When” and “Where” of a piece of evidence from its initial collection to its final disposition (i.e. destruction/storage).
## Evidence Record

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exhibit Number</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Case Number</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Received by</th>
<th>Received from</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>* Court ** Destruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
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</table>
“The Modeling Agency Murders”

At approximately 5:00 A.M. on Thursday morning, fashion model, Joan Marie Caldwell arrived at “Tereza D’s” modeling agency. She went to retrieve some items needed for a photo shoot later that day. Joan figured that by arriving at such an early hour she would be sure to avoid Joyce McKeon, the hyper fashion designer whom she frequently argued with.

Upon her arrival, Joan found the door to the agency’s office jammed. After a third shove, the door opened revealing the bloodied body of Tereza D. Joan quickly exited the office and called the police on her cell phone.

In addition to Tereza D.’s body, Investigators found the bloodied bodies of Joyce McKeon and male model, Kenneth Dogwood. Tereza D. and Joyce McKeon, found face up, appeared to have been stabbed to death, by a sharp, narrow object while Kenneth Dogwood, found face down, had been shot in the back of the head.

While processing the scene, Investigators noted the following:

1. A file cabinet drawer had been pried open (black metal shavings, probably from the object used to open the drawer, clung to the pry marks.)
2. Pink feathers, consistent with the feather boa draped around Joyce McKeon’s neck, were scattered about the room and the floor outside the office door.
3. A partial, bloody shoe print on the floor leading away from the scene.
4. A ripped plastic bag containing an off-white powder lying between the bodies of Tereza D. and Kenneth Dogwood.
5. Flecks of a bright pink substance, resembling Joyce McKeon’s nail polish, on the face of Kenneth Dogwood.
6. Small amounts of off-white powder on the floor inside and outside the door of the office.
7. Clumps of a dark brown substance, below the left hand of Joyce McKeon (The substance resembled soil from the small garden outside the agency.)
8. A 9mm cartridge shell next to the right thigh of Kenneth Dogwood.
1. “Locard’s Exchange Principle,” also known as “transfer-evidence occurrence,” states, “any time there is contact between two objects, there will be an exchange of materials between the two objects.”

Give four (4) examples of “transfer-evidence occurrence” that took place at the Modeling Agency. *Be sure to include the following details for each of the three examples:
   a. **Type** of evidence.
   b. **Where** it was transferred from.
   c. **What** it was transferred to.

2. a. You are the lead investigator at the scene of the murders.
    Which of the following search patterns, Line, Quadrant, Grid or Spiral, would you instruct your fellow-investigators to conduct?

   b. Explain why you would use the type of search pattern you chose.

3. Complete the “Evidence Packaging Procedures” chart on the answer sheet for four (4) pieces of evidence found at the scene.

Below is a copy of the evidence label from the evidence envelope containing the bag of off-white powder found in between the bodies of Tereza D. and Kenneth Dogwood.
The “Gross Weight” of a piece of evidence is described as the weight of the evidence plus the weight of the evidence container (ex. evidence envelope) that it is packaged in.

4.  
   a. Explain why you think it is important for an Investigator to record the Gross Weight for a piece of evidence.
   
   b. What inference can be made if the Gross Weight for Exhibit #5 is found to be 100.2 grams by the Chemist before she opens it for analysis?
   
   c. In terms of “Chain of Custody,” why is it important for the investigator packaging the evidence to write her/his name on the “Collected By” section of the evidence label?
   
   d. Explain why you think it is important for another investigator to witness the collection/sealing of a piece of evidence.

5. The picture to the right, represents a photograph of the partial shoe print that was found at the scene.

   Determine which of the “Suspect” prints, located on your answer sheet, is consistent with the “Crime Scene” print.

   a. Complete the following statement:
      The “Crime Scene” print is consistent with “Suspect” print.

   b. Circle three characteristics (in both the “Crime Scene” and “Suspect” print) that helped you in your individualization of the prints.

6. You are testifying in a court of law. The Prosecutor asks, “Could you please explain the difference between “Class” characteristics and “Individual” characteristics?”

   Write your explanation on the answer sheet.
Section 6 — Exam: History and Crime Scene Investigation

7. On the answer sheet is a copy of the final sketch of the “Modeling Agency Murders” crime scene that you, the “sketcher” are working on.
   a. Using the information in the scenario and the legend, complete the sketch for items 9-17.
   b. Describe the differences between a rough sketch and a final sketch of a crime scene.
   c. Explain why a final sketch rather than a rough sketch is used during court procedures.

8. Based on the evidence and the sketch of the crime scene that you have reviewed for the “Modeling Agency Murders,” what is your opinion of the events? (Ex. Why were the three people killed? Who is responsible for the deaths? What type of weapon(s) was/were used to kill the people?)

Extra Credit:

If an Epidemiologist is defined as… “a scientist who deals with the incidence, distribution and control of disease in a population,” how would you define a Forensic Epidemiologist?