


Crime and Disaster Scene Integrity

403.1 POLICY HEADER

Original Effective Date:	Revised Date:
September 1, 2021	January 4, 2023
<p>Authorization:</p>  <p>Jason Haberman Chief of Police</p>	

403.2 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance in handling a major crime or disaster.

403.3 POLICY

It is the policy of the Mt. Lebanon Police Department to secure crime or disaster scenes so that evidence is preserved, and to identify and mitigate the dangers associated with a major crime or disaster scene for the safety of the community and those required to enter or work near the scene.

403.4 SCENE RESPONSIBILITY

The first officer at the scene of a crime or major incident is generally responsible for the immediate safety of the public and preservation of the scene. Officers shall also consider officer safety and the safety of those persons entering or exiting the area, including those rendering medical aid to any injured parties. Once an officer has assumed or been assigned to maintain the integrity and security of the crime or disaster scene, it shall be maintained until the officer is properly relieved by a supervisor or other designated person.

The Investigative Services Unit (ISU) of the Mt. Lebanon Police Department will be available 24 hours for crime scene processing. The determination to utilize ISU will first be made by the on-duty Watch Commander with approval of the Duty Officer. The Watch Commander will assign an officer to secure the crime scene pending the arrival of ISU if appropriate. The processing officer is responsible for preparing a written report to document scene processing.

403.5 FIRST RESPONDER CONSIDERATIONS

The following list generally describes the first responder's function at a crime or disaster scene. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive, is not necessarily in order and may be altered according to the demands of each situation:

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- (a) Broadcast emergency information, including requests for additional assistance and resources.
- (b) Provide for the general safety of those within the immediate area by mitigating, reducing or eliminating threats or dangers.
- (c) Locate or identify suspects and determine whether dangerous suspects are still within the area.
- (d) Provide first aid to injured parties if it can be done safely.
- (e) Evacuate the location safely as required or appropriate.
- (f) Secure the inner perimeter.
- (g) Protect items of apparent evidentiary value. (For additional procedure on [PROTECTION OF THE CRIME SCENE](#) click here)
- (h) Secure an outer perimeter.
- (i) Identify potential witnesses.
- (j) Start a chronological log noting critical times and personnel allowed access.

403.6 SEARCHES

Officers arriving at crime or disaster scenes are often faced with the immediate need to search for and render aid to victims, and to determine if suspects are present and continue to pose a threat. Once officers are satisfied that no additional suspects are present and/or there are no injured persons to be treated, those exigent circumstances will likely no longer exist. Officers should thereafter secure the scene and conduct no further search until additional or alternate authority for the search is obtained, such as consent or a search warrant.

403.6.1 CONSENT

When possible, officers should seek written consent to search from authorized individuals. However, in the case of serious crimes or major investigations, it may be prudent to also obtain a search warrant. Consent as an additional authorization may be sought, even in cases where a search warrant has been granted.

403.7 INVESTIGATION SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

The Investigation supervisor is responsible for:

- (a) Ensuring reasonable access to qualified personnel, equipment and supplies for processing crime scenes.
- (b) Establishing procedures for collecting, processing and preserving physical evidence in the field.
- (c) Establishing procedures for photographing, video-recording and other imaging used to collect and preserve evidence.
- (d) Establishing procedures for processing, developing, lifting and labeling fingerprints.

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- (e) Establishing procedures for the safe collection, storage, transportation and submission of biological and other evidence for DNA testing and evaluation.

403.8 SCENE POSING PUBLIC HEALTH RISK

When appropriate, members should notify other agencies of incidents posing a risk to the public, including but not limited to, the fire department, the health department and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection when environmental impacts from outdoor chemical spills, improper waste disposal or the presence of other potentially hazardous substances may occur (35 P.S. § 6020.501).