



# Functional Governance Standard Operating Procedure

## Crime scene management

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## Disclosure and classification

This document is classified UNCLASSIFIED and is intended for internal AFP use. Disclosing any content must comply with Commonwealth law and the AFP National Guideline on information management.

## Compliance

This instrument is part of the AFP's professional standards framework. The [AFP Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#) outlines the expectations for appointees to adhere to the requirements of the framework. Inappropriate departures from the provisions of this instrument may constitute a breach of AFP professional standards and be dealt with under Part V of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth).

This document is a functional governance instrument as defined under s.4 of the [AFP Commissioner's Order on Governance \(CO1\)](#).

## Definitions

Crime scene	Means the area in the immediate vicinity of the incident in which evidence may be found. Crime scene also includes a reference to a person from whom evidence may be obtained.
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## Introduction

This Standard Operating Procedure provides guidance for members responding to, managing and finalising crime scenes. It provides information for general reference and, more specifically, provides instruction to first responders when dealing with crime scenes for specific crime types.

This Standard Operating Procedure is to be read in conjunction with relevant AFP guidelines and other relevant statutory or administrative regulations. Members are expected to be conversant with their powers and to utilise them when and where appropriate. It is not the intention of this Standard Operating Procedure to routinely reference legislation or powers except where necessary to provide further clarity and guidance.

## Attending at a crime scene – initial considerations

### Safety considerations & potential threats

The safety and welfare of attending police and other individuals in and within the vicinity of the crime scene must always be the first priority. The first actions of police at a crime scene must reflect this and appropriate emergency services, such as Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service, must take primacy with appropriate police support.

Responding members to any incident must be cognisant of the following potential hazards and, if identified, must notify Operations and other members as soon as practicable:

- environmental dangers and hazardous materials
- chemical, radiological and biological agents in various phases (gas, solid, liquid). This also includes blood borne pathogens and any form of plume
- gas leaks, fire, live electricity, water hazards
- suspect(s), witness(es), victim(s), animals, particularly if violent, injured or there is ongoing criminal activity
- weapons, machinery, conveyances, structures.

A cautious and considered approach in attending a potential crime scene (“look, listen, smell”) so as to ensure member safety must also involve consideration of:

- appropriate use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as ballistic vests or facial protection
- minimising any further actual or potential risks to victims, witnesses and other people, including attending police and other emergency services personnel
- appropriate use of electrical and communications devices, such as prohibiting mobile phone and portable radio use in the direct vicinity of leaked combustible substances
- evaluation of the scene for general and specific safety concerns.

Where any potential hazard or safety requirement is considered, in line with this section, notification must also be made to Operations and other attending members to advise:

- if further police assistance or other emergency services assistance (e.g. fire brigade, ambulance, etc.) appears necessary, including to what extent it is required and its urgency
- what actual or potential hazards have been identified and how/if they are presently being dealt with
- any information or actions that other members should be aware of prior to attending, such as:
  - appropriate use of PPE
  - how/where to enter the crime scene safely
  - triage information for victim care
  - assistance in establishing exclusion or isolation areas.

Where possible, one initial attending member should take primacy with regard to overseeing crime scene management processes, including addressing any safety and welfare issues in the first instance.

## Injured persons & emergency care

If an injured person is at the scene, they must be given first aid immediately, even though valuable evidence may be unavoidably destroyed. The provision of medical aid, including assisting medical personnel (such as driving an ambulance) must always take priority over any evidentiary requirements.

If first aid to an injured person is not immediately essential, police shall:

- note the victims position on a simple sketch
- take photographs where possible
- speak to the victim to obtain a précis of the information they can offer regarding the incident
- obtain full contact details
- consider ensuring the person does not leave the area unless in the company of another responsible person (should a medical injury or condition that is not apparent cause the person's wellbeing to deteriorate after police have spoken to them).

If there is any doubt as to the welfare or medical status of a person, members must seek advice from a qualified medical practitioner, including ambulance personnel.

## Crime scene cordons

Members must first identify relevant crime scenes and consider setting a cordon that is large enough to ensure those crime scenes are physically protected.

Members must also be aware that in the absence of any specific statutory basis and reliance upon common law for setting up and enforcing a cordon, all actions undertaken by police should be reasonable, appropriate and justifiable, particularly if such actions may involve use of force.

When establishing a crime scene cordon members must consider:

- the use of tape and other physical barriers (including vehicles, cones, existing structures, etc.) to clearly establish and identify the boundaries of the crime scene, initially securing a larger perimeter (it is easier to contract, than expand, the boundaries)
- whether it may be necessary to have a police presence at parts of the crime scene boundaries to ensure compliance by members of the public, for example, to ensure civilians do not continue using a road or path that encroaches upon or forms part of a crime scene
- maintaining the integrity of the crime scene, including routine checking on areas of the cordon that may be distant from the original location of the incident
- documenting persons or items at the scene that were moved, including an explanation for the movement and consequent location within the crime scene
- maintaining a crime scene log to document the entry and exit of all people into and out of the crime scene
- preserving and protecting any evidence that is located within the crime scene
- preserving and protecting any access or egress routes used by persons in relation to the actual crime.

Where members have any doubt as to the appropriate size cordon to set up for a crime scene, or any other associated factors such as encroaching upon private property, members must first consult with their Team Leader.

Members should, where required, consider establishing multiple crime scenes and shall contact Operations if additional resources are required to establish and maintain one or more crime scenes.

Certain actions undertaken in accordance with this section may necessarily involve the application of police powers of arrest, search, seizure and entry and are to be undertaken in accordance with relevant legislation and AFP Governance, including Commissioner's Order on Use of Force (CO3).

## Crime scene access

Any person arriving at the crime scene who is required to enter it (for example police, forensics and medical personnel) should be clearly instructed how to enter the scene so as not to disturb it. In addition:

- access and egress routes into, through and out of the crime scene shall be clearly identified and utilised to minimise any contamination or alteration of the crime scene
- equipment can be used to identify these routes (e.g. crime scene tape) or to facilitate access (e.g. stepping plates)
- persons shall be directed to use these routes and may also be directed to avoid contact/interference with evidentiary items and material
- consideration should be given to donning the appropriate level of PPE.

Members must be mindful of the following issues and take action as appropriate to ensure the crime scene is secured and controlled adequately:

- 1) Ensure all persons at the crime scene are controlled and monitored:
  - a. restrict movement if required, so as to prevent any alteration/removal/destruction of physical evidence
  - b. prevent unauthorised persons from unnecessary access, including police, media, public, etc.
  - c. continue to maintain safety at the scene
  - d. continue with a police presence until the scene is released.
- 2) Ensure all persons at the crime scene are identified, including:
  - a. Police – all uniform and plainclothes members
  - b. witnesses – must be secured and separated
  - c. suspects – must be secured and separated
  - d. bystanders – must remain outside of crime scene and be canvassed for potential witnesses/victims/suspects
  - e. victims, including family and friends – be mindful of any forensic considerations regarding the victim and their clothing/belongings
  - f. medical and other assisting personnel – be mindful of any need for medical equipment, including the ambulance vehicle, to enter/remain in/exit the crime scene.

## Attending medical personnel

Where appropriate, clear, specific advice shall be provided to attending medical personnel in relation to the treatment of injured persons. Medical personnel shall be asked to:

- retain any gloves or other disposable equipment they use in the treatment of patients (being mindful of contamination of injuries, etc.) and to place these items into individual bags or containers for direct handover to police
- preserve all clothing worn that is removed from patients, where possible, ensuring any knife cuts, tears, etc., are not altered and to place these items into individual bags for direct handover to police
- preserve any other evidence they find on a patient who is being treated
- not unnecessarily clean up a patient, being mindful of issues such as trace evidence (including DNA on the skin of a victim or biological material underneath the nails of a victim).

Additionally, members shall:

- document any movement of medical personnel through the crime scene

- document the movement of any crime scene items by the actions of medical personnel (e.g. blankets, weapons, furniture, doors, light switches, etc.)
- obtain a written record of all medical personnel in attendance, including name, agency, work duties, work location and contact phone numbers.

Where possible, a police presence must be maintained with emergency medical personnel and any victims/witnesses being treated:

- a police officer shall accompany each victim if being transported in ambulance by emergency medical personnel and ensure any information provided by the victim/witness, whilst being medically treated and/or transported, is contemporaneously recorded:
  - such information should be audio recorded on a digital voice recorder but a written record in an official police notebook or diary is to be used where no digital voice recorder is available
- upon attendance at hospital where ambulance staff may hand over the care of a patient to hospital staff, where appropriate, police are to try and maintain continuity of presence with the patient and any property or evidence removed from the patient until such time as that property or evidence can be obtained and taken into possession by ACT Policing.

## Safety procedures & equipment

Members must consider appropriate use of equipment, including PPE, in responding to and managing a crime scene to ensure both safety of persons (primary concern) and evidentiary integrity (secondary concern).

Appropriate PPE and other police equipment must be worn and/or used, including:

- a) high visibility vests
- b) torches, including high visibility attachments
- c) police vehicle warning lights (and sirens if appropriate)
- d) inclement weather protection, including gloves
- e) face masks or breathing apparatus
- f) external/coverall clothing, including footwear protection and sterile gloves
- g) crime scene markers, including tape, cones and electronic flares.

## Hazardous crime scenes

Where any member attends a potential crime scene that in itself presents dangers, in conjunction with any evacuation processes, members shall set up a sufficient cordon/exclusion zone to maximise the safety of all persons. If necessary, advice can be sought from the ACT Fire Brigade and/or ACTP Bomb Response Team in relation to safe exclusion/cordon zones for certain incidents.

Where further processing of such a crime scene is then considered, specialist advice must first be sought to ensure it is safe to proceed. In any such situations, safety and welfare of the public and

emergency services staff is the primary concern and will over-ride any evidentiary requirements. For example:

- damaged buildings (fire, explosion, motor vehicle impact, etc.) – from the ACT Fire Brigade, structural engineers, etc.
- incidents involving chemicals or other hazardous materials, including fires, clandestine laboratories, plumes, environmental contaminants, etc. – from the ACT Fire Brigade, ACT Environment Protection Authority, etc.
  - This includes ensuring obligations regarding safety of the scene have been properly addressed, per the [Memorandum of Understanding between the AFP \(ACT Policing\) and the ACT Fire Brigade and ACT Rural Fire Service](#)
- motor vehicles (from collision damage) – from the fire brigade, ACT Policing Crash Investigations and Reconstruction Team (qualified automotive mechanics), etc.
- contaminated crime scenes (biological or chemical substances, hypodermic syringes, etc.) – from ACT Fire Brigade, AFP Forensic and Data Centres (FDC), ACT Communicable Disease Control, etc.

## Communication & Support

Current procedures for notifying FDC Crime Scene attendance of incidents and requesting attendance, as managed by ACT Policing Operations, are to be complied with at all times. Any requests for additional support services, such as ACT Fire Brigade, must also be requested through ACT Policing Operations.

Members must avoid the use of electrical devices at crime scenes where combustible gasses may be present and should turn devices off completely

## Crime scene evidentiary considerations

The types of evidence that members shall consider as being potentially available at any crime scene to determine an appropriate level of response and management, including utilising FDC Crime Scene members is outlined in the [crime scene evidentiary considerations](#) document.

## Managing a crime scene

### Initial response actions at scene

The first police attending a crime scene shall, where appropriate:

47E(d)

Pages 10 through 25 redacted for the following reasons:

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22(1)(a)(ii)  
47E(d)

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**From:** 47E(c)  
**To:** 47E(d)  
**Subject:** ACTP Patrol Dispatch Protocol [SEC=UNCLASSIFIED]  
**Date:** Thursday, 5 February 2009 9:38:36 AM  
**Attachments:** [Update to ACTP Patrol Dispatch Protocol.doc](#)  
**Importance:** High

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All ACT Policing members,

Please find attached the updated ACT Policing Patrol Dispatch Protocol detailing the procedures that will be followed by ACT Policing Operations (ACTPOPS) when dispatching and allocating incidents for attendance. It also provides guidance for members in regard to front office generated incidents and for situations where complainants cannot be located at the time of patrol attendance. 47E(d)

47E(d)

The Protocol has been endorsed by the Executive and the ACT Policing Operations Committee and will be implemented immediately.

Any questions regarding the updated Protocol should be directed to the Operations Manager, ACTPOPS, Sgt 47E(c)

Kind regards

47E(c)



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