

DALTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

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I. Policy

It is the policy of the Dalton Police Department that crime scenes be properly processed and protected from unauthorized access that might result in the contamination or destruction of vital physical evidence. **Because there is only one opportunity of conduct a proper crime scene investigation**, when any doubt exists regarding the actual crime **that has been committed**, it is in the best interest of the ~~case~~ **Investigating Officer** to assume that the crime is ~~probably~~ **possibly** the most serious offense and process the scene accordingly, ~~since there is only one opportunity to conduct a proper crime scene investigation.~~

II. Definitions

- A. *Crime Scene* – A geographical location, vehicle, **structure**, conveyance, or combination **thereof** where a crime incident has **been** or is being committed. The crime scene can be a dynamic situational condition resulting in rapidly changing perimeters and dimensions.
- B. *Crime Scene Search* – A planned, coordinated, legal search by trained, competent law enforcement Officers to locate physical evidence or witnesses to the crime being investigated.
- C. *Evidence* – for the purpose of this policy, only physical evidence will be addressed. Physical evidence is anything tangible, having objective existence, which establishes key elements of a crime and relationships of people associated with a crime.
- D. *Officer / Investigator-in-charge* – The Officer / Investigator **that is** in charge of a crime scene.
- E. *Investigating Officer / Investigator* – The Officer / Investigator assigned to conduct the investigation of the crime.

III. Responsibilities

- A. The first Officer to arrive at the scene of a crime shall be responsible for protecting the scene and processing the scene where there is not serious injury or property damage. Minor crimes may only require a report.
- B. The Criminal Investigations Division (CID) shall be responsible for processing crime scenes involving major crimes, such as homicides, rapes, crimes involving serious bodily injuries or serious significant property loss, or other incidents as needed. When an Investigator arrives on at the crime scene, he / she is in charge of and is responsible for that scene. The Department's Crime Scene Analyst Investigator may be called to a scene to assist in with processing the scene.
- C. Where probable cause for the search of a crime scene exists, the investigating Officer / Investigator is responsible for obtaining legal consent prior to a search or for obtaining a search warrant where consent cannot be legally obtained. Searches without consent or a warrant is are justified in cases where exigent circumstances exist (see policy GO98-7.18, Search and Raid Procedures).
- D. The Investigator-in-charge may request assistance from the state crime lab GBI any time help may be needed in properly processing complicated or major crime scenes.
- E. The Investigating Officer / Investigator shall be responsible for requesting laboratory examination of evidence from the GBI crime lab.
- F. Each Investigator will ensure that during his / her tour of duty that his / her assigned vehicle is supplied with items needed to process a crime scene.

IV. Protecting the Crime Scene

- A. Scenes of major crimes should be secured by crime scene tape, ropes, or other boundaries. Officers may be positioned wherever necessary to assist in protecting the scene, if circumstances warrant it needed.
- B. No one should be allowed into the crime scene without permission of the Officer / Investigator-in-charge or a Supervisor in-charge on scene, and then only if the individual's presence is directly needed in the case. All persons, including all first responders, entering the crime scene area will be documented on a crime scene log.
- C. Giving aid to injured persons at the scene of a crime is a matter of first priority. Officers / Investigators should note all changes to the scene of a crime by medical and ambulance personnel.
- D. Officers / Investigators should shall not smoke use any tobacco products, use restrooms, use landline phones, run water, or perform any other activities that might contaminate the crime scene or destroy valuable evidence.
- E. No object shall be moved or evidence collected until directed by the Officer / Investigator-in-charge, unless exigent circumstances exist and the evidence may be lost or contaminated.

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- F. The District Attorney on call may be ~~notified of~~ **contacted concerning** major crime scenes in order to consult about legal considerations at the scene of a crime.

V. **Processing the Scene**

A. General Rules

1. Evidence that might deteriorate by time or be affected by the elements (rain, snow, etc.) shall be processed first.
2. All evidence shall be collected in a logical manner using a search method appropriate for the crime scene (i.e., grid, strip ~~circle~~, point-to-point, spiral, etc.).
3. After processing the more obvious evidence, the search for and collection of additional trace evidence shall be made before dusting for fingerprints.
4. If evidence collected in the field changes possession from one member of the Department to another at any time, the transfer shall be documented in the ~~original~~ **incident** report or a supplemental report.
5. Elimination fingerprints and physical evidence standards ~~s-samples~~ may be collected after the above actions are completed.

B. Photographing and Videotaping

The photographing and videotaping of crime scenes is an invaluable way to illustrate the condition of a crime scene as it existed in its original state. It shall be notated in a report if a crime scene is photographed or videoed. The report should also indicate the date they ~~y~~ **photographs or videos** were taken and the person that took them.

1. Photographing

- a. Officers / **Investigators** will evaluate each crime scene to determine the need for photographs.
- b. If an Officer / **Investigator** determines that the taking of photographs would be beneficial in helping to document the crime scene or evidence at a scene, the Officer / **Investigator** ~~will~~ **shall** take photographs or arrange to have photographs taken. Some scenes may require the assistance of the Department's Crime Scene ~~Analyst~~ **Investigator**.
- c. All ~~aspects of the crime scene should~~ **photographs shall** be ~~photographed~~ **made** in an effort to fairly and accurately depict **all aspects** of the **crime** scene. Photographs should be taken of the entire scene first and subsequent photographs taken as the Officer / **Investigator** progressively moves towards more specific aspects of the scene.

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- d. Photographs should be taken before evidence is processed and collected in order to document where the evidence was found at the crime scene.
- e. After photographs have been taken, the images shall be downloaded and ~~sent to the Department's secure server or~~ attached directly to the applicable case number in the Department's RMS system.

2. Videotaping

- a. The use of videotaping is generally reserved for major crime scenes when, in the opinion of the Investigator-in-charge, videotaping would be beneficial.
- b. Like photographing, videotaping should begin by looking at the big picture and then the minute details. Videotaping should also be conducted before evidence is processed and collected.
- c. When videotaping, all persons that are not absolutely necessary in the crime scene area shall be removed.
- d. When videotaping, the audio should be disabled to avoid outside noises distracting from the video.
- e. After videos have been completed, the files shall be downloaded and ~~sent to the department's secure server or~~ attached directly to the applicable case number in the Department's RMS system.

C. Fingerprints

1. Fingerprints may be recovered from a variety of surfaces, including smooth surfaces, glass, paper, metal, plastic, and desk and or counter tops.
2. Where the possibility of latent prints exists, the Officer / Investigator-in-charge or Crime Scene Analyst Investigator should properly dust for the prints.
3. When a latent print becomes visible after dusting, the Officer, Investigator, or Crime Scene Analyst Investigator will shall lift the print by using latent print lifting tape.
4. The tape will shall be placed onto a fingerprint card and with the back of the card notated with the date, case number, location of incident, print location, and the person's name that lifted the print.
5. The Crime Scene Analyst Investigator or other personnel that have received proper training may also utilize other techniques to process collected evidence for latent prints.

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VI. **Marking / Collecting Evidence**

- A. A piece of evidence may be marked on the container or item, as appropriate, to show its original position / location.
- B. A piece of evidence may be marked distinctively by the Officer / Investigator who found the particular piece of evidence so that it may be identified later.
- C. Each item should be described exactly and completely with the corresponding case number, date, and time of collection.
- D. Each item should be packaged separately, avoiding even the appearance of a possibility of contamination.
- E. Wet items or items with blood, such as clothing, bed sheets, or patches of carpet, should be dried before being packaged. The drying chamber, located in the Property and Evidence section, shall be used for items that will take an extended period of time to dry.
- F. Special Considerations:
 - 1. Computer Equipment and Data Storage Devices

When criminal investigations involve the seizure of computer equipment or electronic data storage devices, the proper method of collecting and preserving hardware, software, and data files is of paramount importance.

a. Personnel shall follow these general procedures:

- 1. Immediately restrict access to the computer equipment, electronic data storage device, and the surrounding area to necessary personnel.
- 2. Photograph the scene, including the computer / device and any peripheral equipment.
- 3. Preserve the scene due to possible latent fingerprint evidence.
- 4. Search the immediate area of the computer / device, paying special attention to any notes, information, or passwords that the suspect may have written.

b. Personnel collecting stand-alone computers shall follow these specific procedures:

- 1. If the computer is off, DO NOT turn it on.
- 2. If the computer is on, DO NOT turn it off.

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3. Personnel must first remove the power cord from the rear of the computer and then remove the power cord from the outlet. If a laptop computer does not turn off in this manner, then locate and remove the battery pack.
 4. To enable accurate reassembly later, employees shall clearly label all existing connections to and from the computer.
 5. Properly package all components and keep them away from magnets, radio transmitters, and other potentially damaging elements.
- c. Personnel collecting storage media or computer software should notate the location where the item(s) was located. The item(s) must also be kept away from magnets, radio transmitters, and other potentially damaging elements.
- d. Personnel collecting PDAs, cell phones, tablets, and digital cameras shall follow these specific procedures:
1. If the device is off, DO NOT turn it on.
 2. If the device is on, DO NOT turn it off. Leave the device on; powering down the device could enable a password.
 3. Activate the device's "airplane mode," if possible. This will ensure the device cannot be remotely erased.
 - ~~3.4.~~ If the device is charging, first remove the power cord from the rear of the device and then remove the power cord from the outlet.
 - ~~4.5.~~ Collect all cables and attempt to keep the device charged.
 - ~~5.6.~~ If the battery is removed, data may be lost.
2. DNA Evidence
- a. First responder responsibilities and precautions
1. It is the responsibility of the first responding Officer to ~~assure~~ ensure that any item containing suspected DNA ~~shall~~ be protected from contamination, until it can be properly collected. Suspected DNA evidence must be protected from contamination by the public, other persons at the scene, and ~~from~~ inclement weather.
 2. Because extremely small samples of DNA can be used as evidence, greater attention to contamination is necessary.

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3. Evidence can be contaminated when DNA from another source gets mixed with DNA relevant to the case. This can happen when someone sneezes or coughs over the evidence or touches his / her mouth, nose, or other part of the face and then touches the area of the evidence containing the DNA.
- b. Collection, storage, and transportation
1. Suspected DNA evidence shall be collected by personnel that have received proper training in the procedures for the collection and handling of such evidence. At a minimum the training will cover the basic collecting and packaging of DNA. Disposable latex or nitrile gloves ~~will~~ shall be worn when handling items containing suspected DNA or when collecting suspected DNA samples. Items that contain suspected DNA shall be placed in paper bags or paper envelopes. When collecting suspected DNA samples, the following procedures apply:
 - (a) If the surface / stain to be swabbed is wet, use a two (2) clean, sterile cotton-tipped applicators and swab the suspect area. ~~Allow the swab to dry then place in a swab box.~~ Place the swabs into separate swab boxes. The swabs may be placed into swab boxes after either being allowed to dry or while still wet. Seal both ends of the swab boxes and initial the seals.
 - (b) If the surface / stain is dry, use a clean, sterile cotton-tipped applicator, moisten the end with a sterile distilled water ampule, then swab the suspect area. Then use a second dry, sterile cotton-tipped applicator in the same area that was just swabbed with the moistened swab. ~~Allow the swabs to dry and place them in separate swab boxes.~~ Place the swabs into separate swab boxes. The swabs may be placed into swab boxes after either being allowed to dry or while still wet. Seal both ends of the swab boxes and initial the seals.
 - (c) The following information should also be written on the outside of the swab boxes: applicable case number, suspect name (if known), location, date, and name of Officer / Investigator who collected the swab(s).

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- (d) Place the swab boxes into paper evidence envelopes and seal. Swabs collected from different areas / stains should be packaged in separate evidence envelopes and submitted as separate items of evidence.
 - 2. DNA evidence should never be placed in plastic bags. The moisture contained in the bags can damage the DNA. The collection of some DNA evidence may require specialized techniques and the expertise of the Department's Crime Scene Analyst Investigator or other personnel that have received proper training.
 - ~~2.3.~~ When transporting and storing DNA evidence, it must be kept dry and at room temperature. The evidence must be transported in such a way that ensures proper identification and proper chain of custody.
- c. Submission to the Crime Lab

The Investigating Officer / Investigator shall complete a Georgia Bureau of Investigation Evidence Submission Form for any DNA evidence that requires submission to one of the GBI accredited crime laboratories. DNA evidence shall be submitted to a GBI crime laboratory in accordance with policy GO88-4.10, Property and Evidence Policy and Procedure.

VII. Collection of Known Source Material

When available, materials and substances shall be collected from a known source for submission to the GBI crime lab for comparison with other physical evidence submitted. Examples include hairs, and fibers, paint, glass, wood, soil, tool marks, etc.

VIII. Reporting

A report shall be prepared by the person(s) Officer / Investigator who processes a crime / traffic collision scene. The report should include:

- A. Date and time of arrival
- B. Location of the crime or traffic collision
- C. Name of the victim(s) and suspect(s), if any
- D. Actions taken at the scene, including a list of all physical evidence recovered
- E. Case number and name of investigating Officer
- F. Disposition of physical evidence
- G. Crime scene measurement information, if any

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This policy supersedes any previous policies issued.

BY ORDER OF

CHIEF OF POLICE

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