



MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

725 – CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATIONS

GENERAL ORDER: 2025-37
ISSUED: August 4, 2025

EFFECTIVE: August 4, 2025

REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:
Assistant Chief Nicole Waldner
DATE: July 2, 2025

ACTION: Amends General Order 2023-21 (May 16, 2023)

WILEAG STANDARD(S): 6.3.3

725.00 PURPOSE

The actions taken by the patrol and investigative police members at any crime scene often determine the course and success of a criminal investigation. The purpose of this procedure is to ensure the efficient and effective management of criminal investigations by identifying the responsibilities of patrol and investigative components within the department.

725.05 POLICY

It is the policy of the Milwaukee Police Department that all police members understand and follow applicable procedures established herein to effectively protect, collect and preserve evidence of a crime, and conduct all essential investigative tasks at crime scenes.

725.10 DEFINITION

For purposes of this standard operating procedure, a major crime scene will be determined by a commanding officer or designee of the respective Criminal Investigation Bureau division.

725.15 INITIAL RESPONSE (WILEAG 6.3.3)

A. PATROL OFFICER RESPONSIBILITIES

First responding officers shall initiate the preliminary investigation and perform tasks designated below until otherwise directed by a higher ranking officer, detective, or another member of the police force specifically assigned to conduct the criminal investigation when safety permits and as soon as practical to do so.

1. In transit to crime scenes, officers shall be cognizant of suspects/vehicles that may be in flight.
2. Upon arrival, verify that a crime has been committed and relay essential information to the dispatcher and to other responding officers. Members shall obtain this information, in part, by interviewing and identifying the victim(s) and/or witness(es) to obtain as much information as quickly as possible. While it is critical to gather this information as quickly as possible, members should consider the emotional state of victim(s) and/or witness(es).
(WILEAG 6.3.3.2)

3. Officers may “freeze the scene” for a brief period of time in order to determine whether those individuals present are involved and to identify any potential witnesses. Officers shall only detain individuals for a reasonable period of time necessary to determine whether the person is involved in the crime or a witness. Officers shall not detain a person if it is determined they are not a witness or suspect.
 - a. Reasonableness is determined, in part, by considering: (1) the seriousness of the crime witnessed, (2) the nature of the information the witness can reasonably be expected to provide, (3) the level of proof the witness can provide, and (4) whether there are less intrusive methods to obtain the same information.
 - b. Upon determining a person is a witness, the officer shall notify the primary officer or detective in charge of the investigation, the incident commander, or a supervisor so the witness can be interviewed as soon as reasonably possible.
 - c. Officers may consult with the incident commander or a supervisor if there is any question whether or not to release a person from the scene if the scene is frozen.
4. Administer first aid and/or activate the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system. Take necessary steps to protect victims and others.
5. Whenever a member of the police force finds a dead human body, he/she shall promptly communicate that fact to the shift commander of the district in which the body is found. They shall never assume that such a body is dead, except where it is decapitated, decomposed, burned or otherwise obvious.
6. Arrest the perpetrator if at the scene. A decision to leave the crime scene to arrest or pursue the perpetrator should be made based on weighing the immediate needs of the victims and others against the safety of the public if the perpetrator were allowed to escape. Officers shall contact their shift commander to determine if district personnel or the respective investigative division will interview the suspect.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.2)
7. Establish a crime scene perimeter by use of tape, cones, etc. and secure the crime scene to the degree possible against contamination or loss of evidence.
 - a. Members shall not park their department vehicle in such a manner that would prevent the passage of emergency vehicles.
 - b. If a department vehicle is being used for traffic control or the blocking of a street, a member shall remain with the department vehicle at all times.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.3)
8. Officers shall record any alterations made at the crime scene due to emergency assistance to victims, and any movement or handling of evidence by officers or citizens. Restrict the movement or handling of any dead body to that movement which is necessary for medical attention and scene safety.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.1)

9. To the extent possible, restrict all persons from the crime scene who are not directly involved in the investigation.
10. Officers shall obtain information about the suspect if not in custody and shall broadcast a description of the suspect(s), vehicles used, direction and mode of travel, as well as whether the suspect was armed with a firearm or other deadly weapon.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.2)
11. Officers shall attempt to identify any witnesses who are present at the crime scene and shall separate witnesses to the extent possible, to avoid tainting their recollection of the event.
 - a. Every reasonable effort should be made to ensure that witnesses remain at the scene, to allow for a detailed interview by detectives or investigating officers. While officers and detectives may request a witness statement, the witness is not required to answer any questions, cooperate with law enforcement, and are free to leave at any point. The only exception to a person being free to leave is when a member temporarily freezes the scene (see subsection 3 above).
 - b. The success of our investigations is dependent upon the support, trust and cooperation of our witnesses. While it is critical to gather information in a timely manner, the circumstances of an investigation and the emotional state of a witness should be considered and may occasionally necessitate that an interview be delayed.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.2)
12. Officers shall, as soon as practicable, notify their shift commander of details of their preliminary investigation so that a determination can be made, in consultation with the Criminal Investigation Bureau (CIB) shift commander, as to the appropriate resources needed at the scene.
13. A canvass of nearby buildings shall be conducted, in an effort to locate additional witnesses. Officers shall note all addresses within the established perimeter and shall document the identities of all persons present within the buildings. A canvass of vehicles within the established perimeter shall also be conducted and their location, description, and identifying information shall be noted, including registered ownership information.
 - a. Members conducting a canvass shall utilize the *Canvass Checklist*. Members shall leave a *Door Hang* on any building where a person does not answer the door when the member is conducting a canvass related to a gun fire incident.
 - b. A secondary canvass shall be conducted within 24-hours of all homicides and non-fatal shootings. The shift commander of the Homicide Division or Gun Violence Division shall coordinate with the shift commander of the district where the incident occurred to determine if the secondary canvass will be conducted by the Criminal Investigation Bureau or Patrol Bureau.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.2)

14. Officers shall conduct wanted checks of all witnesses, suspects and victims.
15. Officers shall record all conditions, events, and remarks at the scene. Officers shall document their investigation in their memorandum books as soon as practical. Notations must be accurate and complete, as they will serve as the memory of the investigating officer and assist him/her in completing his/her written reports. Pertinent information necessary may include: time of arrival, weather conditions, approximate time of offense, time offense was discovered, other officers present, etc.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.1)
16. All officers, having performed any tasks at a crime scene, shall file a written report detailing their activities prior to securing from duty. From time to time it may be necessary to file reports at a later date; however, this shall only be done with the approval of the supervisor in charge of the investigation.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.4)

B. PATROL SERGEANT RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A patrol sergeant arriving at the scene shall establish a command post, designate a safe entry route, and assess the need for additional officers.
2. The patrol sergeant is responsible for ensuring that the incident is stabilized as quickly as possible.
3. If not already completed, the patrol sergeant shall communicate the preliminary facts of the case to his/her shift commander, in order to facilitate the dispatch of appropriate investigative resources to the scene.
4. Ensure investigating police members have completed their responsibilities as detailed in 725.15(A).
5. When supervising a crime scene, a patrol sergeant shall limit crime scene access to only those persons who are involved in the investigation.

725.20 SCENE INVESTIGATION (WILEAG 6.3.3)

A. DETECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A detective shall assume responsibility for oversight and completion of all crime scenes as defined by the CIB shift commander.
2. In the absence of a supervisor, the detective shall have the authority and responsibility to establish priorities, document statements of witnesses and suspects, make decisions regarding witnesses and suspects and conduct all other activities relevant to a comprehensive investigation of the incident.
3. They shall ensure that a thorough investigation is conducted and any tasks that are not completed at the end of their tour of duty shall be documented as follow-up, in

the manner prescribed by their work location. The task of completing follow-up may be delegated to other detectives; however, the overall responsibility for completion of the case rests with the initial detective.

4. All detectives who conduct any relevant tasks at a crime scene shall document their results in a written report prior to securing from duty. From time to time, it may be necessary to complete reports at a later date; however, this shall only be done with the approval of a supervisor.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.4)
5. Detectives shall complete a crime scene diagram (either electronically or sketched) for all fatal and non-fatal shootings, suspicious deaths, or any other major crime scenes where a supervisor deems a crime scene diagram will assist in future investigative or prosecutorial action. Detectives shall save the crime scene diagram in the case file.
6. The primary supervisor shall ensure that an entry is detailed in the Criminal Investigation Bureau SharePoint site, providing a synopsis of the investigation, for all incidents as prescribed by the Criminal Investigation Bureau shift commander.
7. In the event that an arrest is made or probable cause exists to make an arrest, the detective shall ensure that all reports are collected and presented to a prosecutor for review, in a timely manner.

B. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. A supervisor shall assume responsibility for overall supervision of a crime scene as prescribed by the CIB shift commander.
2. The supervisor shall ensure that the incident is stabilized as quickly as possible, the appropriate perimeter has been established and evidence is properly protected.
3. The supervisor shall determine what resources are necessary and request those resources through the incident commander (patrol sergeant).
4. The supervisor shall assign tasks to the detectives and other personnel as deemed necessary and shall liaison with personnel at the scene and other locations to ensure that relevant information is disseminated.
5. The supervisor shall file an entry in the Criminal Investigation Bureau SharePoint site, detailing the results of the investigation, for all crime scenes as prescribed by the commanding officer of that investigative division.
6. If media personnel are on scene and request information, the incident commander, or designee, shall provide information consistent with department protocol, either directly or through an official department news release by the Public Information Office or night watch commander.

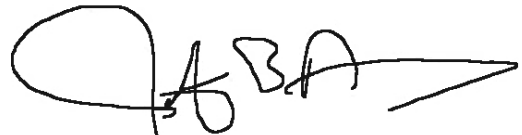
725.25 EVIDENCE COLLECTION (WILEAG 6.3.3)**A. DETECTIVE RESPONSIBILITIES**

Detectives shall ensure that all evidence is safeguarded, photographed, measured, diagrammed and collected. The procedures shall conform to established laws and department guidelines. Detectives are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the crime scene(s) until the initial investigation is completed and are responsible for ensuring that the following tasks have been completed, when applicable to the investigation.

B. In the absence of a detective, police officers investigating a crime scene shall be responsible for the same tasks.

1. When arriving at a scene, detectives shall liaison with the initial responding officer, or sergeant in charge of the scene, and obtain the preliminary information. They shall then ensure that the appropriate perimeter has been established and evidence is properly protected.
2. A limited walk-through of the crime scene shall be completed to determine the scope of the investigation. In an investigation where biological evidence may be present, all unnecessary personnel shall remain outside the inner perimeter, to avoid contamination of the scene.
3. At all crime scenes, a detective shall be responsible for evidence collection. Only those persons necessary to the investigation shall enter the inner perimeter.
(WILEAG 6.3.3.3)
4. Police officers, detectives, forensic investigators, and crime scene investigators may be required to wear protective clothing, to include gloves, foot coverings, protective suits and head coverings, to prevent cross contamination of evidence. The facts of the case and type of evidence to be collected will determine whether protective clothing is needed.
5. When investigating a death, the detective shall take note of the location, position, condition and description of the body. Take note of injuries or trauma to the body and the presence of any weapons or contraband on or near the body.
6. The medical examiner's office shall be notified for all death investigations and will be provided with all relevant information. Papers and other items found on the body shall generally remain with the body and shall be collected by an investigator from the medical examiner's office. The investigator shall note any papers or other property found on a dead body. Any items that may constitute evidence shall be taken and inventoried, with the knowledge of the medical examiner's office.
7. Prior to moving and collecting any evidence, the detective shall note the location, position and description of items and shall take reasonable steps to ensure that a diagram can be created if needed. Measurements shall be taken for all major crime scenes.

8. The crime scene and corresponding evidence shall be photographed prior to collection. The detective is responsible for ensuring that the photographer is aware of the location of all evidence.
9. Photographs shall include overall, mid-range and close-up views of all evidence. Scales shall be used when photographing evidence such as blood spatter, tool marks, footprints and tire impressions. When appropriate, the crime scene may be video recorded.
10. The detective shall examine the scene for the presence of biological evidence such as blood, hair, semen, etc. and shall cause the items to be collected in the manner consistent with current protocol established by the CIB or the Forensics Division.
11. The scope of the crime scene processing is dictated by the seriousness of the crime and the resources available; however, every reasonable effort shall be made to recover evidence such as clothing, fibers, tools, weapons, casings and bullets. Items that may have been handled by suspect(s) shall be examined for the presence of fingerprints and when appropriate, those items shall be swabbed for DNA analysis.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.B. Norman', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

JEFFREY B. NORMAN
CHIEF OF POLICE

JBN:mfk