Crime Scene Investigation Protocol

The State of the Art

© Larry Barksdale, 8-9-04
Protocols

- A protocol is a defined way of going about doing something.
- A protocol may be formally defined in a written policy, or generally understood among practitioners as a method of action.
- Protocols serve as checks and balances on the efficiency, effectiveness and economy of crime scene techniques and crime scene investigations.
This Is My Method

- A protocol tells a jury, judge, interested party and peers that you have a method. It speaks to the belief of others that you know what you are doing, and it projects the image that you apply professional standards in your work.

- Take note of the protocols of health care professionals.
Crime Scene Protocol – Hayden Baldwin

- **Interview** - people at scene to ascertain “theory” of the case.
- **Examine** – to substantiate theory, identify points of entry, identify potential evidence.
- **Photograph** - pictorial record, overall and specific.
- **Sketch** – spatial relationship of scene elements and inventory.
- **Process** – for physical and testimonial evidence.
Secure – do as soon as practical to preserve evidence, and to restrict non-essential personnel (p. 24).

Search – for and recognize what is critical evidence, supporting evidence, what is not evidence, and protect evidence from alteration or loss (p. 24).

Record – using a wide variety of methods, not all scenes are recorded by the same methods (p. 24).

Reconstruction - of actions and motive at the scene with reliance upon the evidence as it resides within the scene, and as a contribution to the interviewing process (p. 24).
Scientific Crime Scene Investigation (Dr. Henry Lee, et.al.)

- Scene security.
- Documentation of the crime scene
- Collection and preservation of physical evidence.
- Scene survey.
- Scene definition or analysis.
- Development of link between physical evidence and persons.
- Reconstruction of the scene.
Crime Scene Protocol: A Composite of the Literature

- Secure – establish a baseline.
- Interview – officers, emergency medical, witnesses.
- Examine – the scene and environment.
- Photograph – overall, mid, close, with/without scale, with/without marker.
- Sketch – the spatial relationships of the scene.
- Process – the scene and scene components.
- Reconstruct – the call for service.
- Report – logs, evidence reports, investigative actions.
Crime Scene Processing: Additional Thoughts

- **Orientation** – number of scenes, security of evidence, environmental issues, accessibility.
- **Management** – resources, allocation of resources, maintenance of resources, scene entry logs.
- **Identification** – walkthrough, assessment, placing of placards.
- **Collection** – gathering evidence and information in a systematic way.
- **Documentation** – digital, video, mapping, sketching, recording.
- **Storage** – packaging, transportation, long term storage, chain of custody.
- **Analysis** – investigative, presumptive, laboratory.
- **Debriefing** – brain storming, review logs, information exchange, prepare search warrant receipt, inventory evidence.
- **Interpretation/Reconstruction** – apply investigative paradigms.
- **Re-visit** – additional processing of the scene.
Scientific Crime Scene Investigation

- It is based upon the Scientific Method.
- It speaks to a systematic and methodical approach to scene investigation.
- It recognizes and attempts to minimalize Locard’s Exchange Principal.
- It relies heavily upon logical analysis.
- The basis is forensic analysis.
- The consilient approach takes precedence.
Protocol and Events

- The following photos are from a homicide crime scene.
- How would you apply a crime scene protocol - what would you do first, second, next and so forth?
- What, other than the photos, would be significant evidence?
Secure – establish a baseline.
Interview – officers, emergency medical, witnesses.
Examine – the scene and environment.
Photograph – overall, mid, close, with/without scale, with/without marker.

Sketch – the spatial relationships of the scene.
Process – the scene and scene components.
Reconstruct – the call for service.
Report – logs, evidence reports, investigative actions.

Tuesday, January 8, 13
Summary

- Protocols should be written and published in an SOP.
- They should be general guidelines.
- Whatever is written may be used to hold one’s feet to the fire.
- Make your protocol a part of each scene investigation.
References
