**First Responding Officer Gives**

**Direction to Crime Scene**

Arguably, the most important person at a crime scene is the first officer to arrive. The first responding officer often makes or breaks a crime scene. The manner in which he initially handles a crime scene can dictate how things go in the overall investigation. The journey from crime to conviction begins when the first officer arrives. Let’s take a look at some issues an officer can face if he’s first at the scene.

When encountering a crime scene, the first responding officer needs to quickly do several things. Initially, the safety and well-being of any individuals present is paramount. Removal of potential threats to self and others takes precedence over first aid to those already on the crime scene. This involves self-protection for the officer, ensuring that he is safe and that the threat of additional victims is minimized. Next, the officer needs to care for the injured. If the victim is still alive, an attempt should be made to take a dying declaration. While it is possible that emergency medical personnel have been called to the scene, it may be necessary to administer first aid to any victims.

Once people at the scene have been attended to, the important work of crime scene investigation begins. Step one involves dealing with the evidence. First, make sure that all potential evidence is preserved. The first officer should try to find the entry and exit of the suspects and victims, and direct the emergency personnel to enter at another point or via a pathway that the officer has already established as a safe pathway. This is where the least evidence is disturbed. Remember, at this point, anything may be evidence and scrutinized in court. Before a crime scene is secured, it is easy to destroy evidence; the presence of relatives of victims or the officer himself can easily affect the state of the evidence. Be aware that suspects’ friends or families of the victims may try to remove or alter important evidence from the crime scene. For example, family may attempt to make a suicide look like an accident in order to collect insurance money.

The scene may be chaotic with injuries, loss of life, and a host of witnesses and other people present but it is important that the first responding officer records as much information as possible. It may be too difficult to painstakingly write everything down, but a record (even just notes jotted in a notebook) will help to serve as a definitive chronicle of what happened. It may be used by investigators to decide how to proceed; by prosecutors to decide how to try the case; and by defense attorneys to question the police action. Everything from treatment of the injured to the apparent nature of the crime should be noted. Document what was seen, what was done, and who was there. In addition to the written notes, the officer should be making mental notes as he makes a visual inspection of the scene. If possible, the first officer can take unobtrusive photos of any crowds or people.

Again, the first officer to respond dictates the overall direction of the ensuing investigation. Remember: if the actions of the first responding officer are undocumented and poorly organized, then all the following events in the crime scene search may lack direction.

The first responding officer should secure and protect the scene focusing on the immediate area. By not attempting to go beyond human capacity, the officer should do whatever he can to gain control. As more officers arrive, the scene can be expanded and duties can be parceled out.

Dealing with victims is first priority, but dealing with witnesses is a close second. As quickly as possible, identify witnesses and keep them at the scene. Witnesses often have second thoughts, so opt for a thorough questioning at the scene. Keep witnesses separate to avoid collaboration of testimony. Memories fade and other issues may influence the decision of witnesses to cooperate later.

The first responding officer is tasked with getting the ball rolling, so to speak. He contacts the department with details of what he has and what he needs. Maybe he doesn’t need more help; maybe he does. His estimation of manpower and expertise to properly process the scene is key to investigating the crime and prosecuting the perpetrator. Once additional crime scene officers arrive, the first responding officer should explain everything he saw and everything he did.

Of utmost importance is any actions taken by the first responding officer regarding weapons. A weapon may have been moved in order to make the scene more safe and secure or to allow the EMS to perform care for the victim. If that’s the case, the officer needs to document what he moved and where.

The first responding officer holds a tremendous amount of responsibility not only for the crime scene but also for the overall investigation and ultimately the prosecution of the case. It is easy to tell a first responding officer what to do if he is part of a large department with dedicated crime scene officers and detectives to turn the crime scene over to. In smaller agencies, however, the first officer at the scene may end up taking on all those roles himself. He needs to know his limits and capabilities – and when to call other agencies with the right expertise.

<https://www.forensicmag.com/article/2006/04/first-responding-officer-gives-direction-crime-scene>

# Duty Description for the Crime Scene Investigator

### The Crime Scene Investigator or Evidence Recovery Technician: In the Scientific community the crime scene investigator or evidence recovery technician is accepted as a forensic specialist. His/ Her specialty is considered a professional organized step by step approach to the processing of a crime scene. Extensive study, training, and experience in crime scene investigations is needed for the investigator to be proficient in the field. He/she must be well versed in all areas of recognition, documentation and recovery of physical evidence that may be deposited at the scene. A general knowledge of what analysis may be performed in the lab as well as proper procedures in handling, collecting and packaging of items of evidence is needed to assure those recovered items will safely arrive at the lab.

### Processing the Crime Scene: In an Organized approach to Crime Scene Investigations there are three (3) basic and simple stages in properly processing the crime scene . Those stages consist of Scene Recognition, Scene Documentation and Evidence Collection. An organized approach is a sequence of established and excepted duties and protocols.

### An organized approach assures:

* a thorough and legal search is conducted.
* expeditious processing without compromise.
* proper scene documentation.
* proper methods and techniques for evidence recovery.
* proper use and knowledge of resources and equipment.
* all pertinent evidence recovery.
* proper handling and packaging of evidence.
* proper distribution points for evidence analysis.
* proper safety precautions are followed.

### Scene Recognition: The recognition or discovery of evidence begins with the initial search of the scene. The search can be defined as the organized and legal examination of the crime scene to locate items of evidence to the crime under investigation. There are several search methods or patterns applied in an organized search. Factors such as the number of searchers, the size of the area to be searched, the terrain, etc. are used to determine the method or pattern to be employed in the crime scene search.

Since most investigations start with very limited information, care and common sense are necessary to minimize the chances of destroying evidence. A plan of operation is developed and initiated from an initial walk through of the scene. The plan is to decide what evidence may be present, what evidence may be fragile and need to be collected as soon as possible. What resources, equipment, and assistance are necessary for the processing. Consideration of hazards or safety conditions may need to be addressed.

### Scene Documentation: In the documentation stage of an organized approach for processing the crime scene all functions have to correspond and be consistent in depicting the crime scene. The final results of a properly documented crime scene is the ability of others to take your finished work and reconstruction the events that occurred at the scene and your court room presentation. In the Scene Documentation stage there are three simple steps to properly document the crime scene.

* Written notes and reports.
* Photographs.
* Sketching.

### Reports: Each method is important in the proper documenting of a crime scene. The notes and reports should be done in a chronological order and should include no opinions, no analysis, or no conclusion. Just the facts!!! The scene should be documented just as the investigator sees it.

### Photographs: The photographs should be taken as soon as possible, to depict the scene as it is observed before anything is handled, moved, or initiated into the scene. The photographs allow a visual permanent record of the crime scene and items of evidence collected from the crime scene. There are three positions or views that the crime scene investigator needs to achieve with the photographs. Those views consist of overall scene photographs showing the most view possible of the scene, mid-range photographs showing the relationships of items and a close up of the item of evidence.

A close up should be taken of items that have serial numbers, tags and vin's. All stationary evidence where the photograph will be used to assist in the analytical process should be taken using a tripod with the proper lighting techniques for creating any needed shadows. A second photograph adding a measuring devise should be taken of items where the photo will assist in the analytical process.

### Sketching a crime scene: Sketches are used along with the reports and photographs to document the scene. A crime scene sketch is simply a drawing that accurately shows the appearance of a crime scene. The sketch is simply drawn to show items, the position and relationship of items. It does not have to be an architectural drawing made to a scale, however it must include exact measurements where needed. The advantage of a sketch is that it can cover a large area and be drawn to leave out clutter that would appear in photographs.

### Evidence Collection: The evidence collection or recovery step in crime scene processing is the methods, techniques, and procedures used in retrieving evidence. Patience and care are very important at the crime scene. The investigator should take the proper time and care in processing the scene. The work is tedious and time consuming.

Teamwork in crime scene investigations is essential. The entire investigation may involve many people from different organizations. Each individual has a vital role in the investigation process. Continual communication among all parties involved is paramount. Consideration to comfort has to be given during the process stage. The investigator will continuously be in different positions and moving around. The only limits that the investigator will have during the process of retrieving the evidence will be his/her own imagination. Always make your equipment work for you, don't work for the equipment. The work done at a crime scene is very challenging. Don't just stand and speak of your work. A great investigator-technician allows their work to speak of them!!!!

<http://www.crime-scene-investigator.net/dutydescription.html>

# Role & Duties of a District Attorney

District attorneys are the top prosecuting attorneys for state crimes occurring within their counties' borders. DAs are typically elected by county residents, or in some cases, are appointed under state law. A DA's office participates in criminal investigations and determines whether to file criminal charges. DAs work to reach plea deals with criminal defendants, and try criminal cases before judges and juries when negotiation fails.

## Criminal Investigation

DAs play investigatory roles in criminal cases, both independently and by working cooperatively with local and state police. They take victim statements, conduct witness interviews, gather facts, and compile and analyze forensic evidence to build criminal cases. DAs also manage special units designated to investigate certain crimes. For example, these units might focus on investigations into sexual abuse, white collar crimes, elder abuse or cyber threats.

## Charges and Grand Juries

DAs make the final determinations on whether to prepare and file criminal charges in court against alleged criminal perpetrators. In some circumstances, DAs must convince grand juries, which are comprised of ordinary U.S. citizens, that criminal charges are justified. For example, in Florida, DAs can independently file any criminal charge except first degree murder. The DA must obtain an indictment, or approval, from a grand jury to charge a person with first degree murder.

## Court Work

DAs represent the public's interest in court proceedings relating to criminal prosecutions. They attend arraignments, bail and motion hearings, and if needed, take criminal charges before judges and juries at trial. In court, DAs examine eyewitnesses as well as expert witness such as medical examiners. DAs also present evidence, such as a murder weapon or surveillance tapes, to juries. If a convicted criminal appeals a guilty verdict, the DA's role also includes defending the public's position on appeal.

## Ethical Duties

DAs are elected to represent the citizens of their counties. They are non-partisan and held to high standards of legal ethics. They are forbidden from frivolously bringing criminal charges. They also must take reasonable steps to inform an accused criminal of his legal rights. DAs also must inform the court of any new evidence they discover during prosecutions which may exonerate defendants.

<https://careertrend.com/role-duties-district-attorney-10921.html>

**Medical Examiner**

Medical examiners, also referred to as forensic pathologists, are medical doctors who perform autopsies and other investigations to determine a cause of death. They are licensed professionals who are educated, trained, and certified to do their job. The road to a career as a medical examiner can be a long one, as one must hold an M.D. (Doctor of Medicine). In all cases a forensic pathologist deals with, he or she must have an acute knowledge of both science and the human body, and he or she must be able to explain in great detail his/her conclusions. Many times they are called upon in courts of law to help the court understand physical evidence and how it relates to the cause of death, time of death, etc. in a criminal trial. During a prospective medical examiners education, he or she can take advantage of ‘elective’ courses, and choose to get more in-depth in topics related to medicine and science to help them further their career and reputation.

**Medical Examiners Education**

Those who are interested in becoming a medical examiner should start considering it after high school, preferably before earning a bachelor’s degree in another field. There are degrees offered in related fields, such as forensic science, however a bachelor’s degree in forensic science isn’t necessarily required (though it can be helpful) to land the job of your dreams. Undergrad students should focus on the principles behind pathology; chemistry, biology, and physics instead.

Once a bachelor’s degree is obtained, a prospective medical examiner needs to then earn either a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or a Doctor of Osteopathy (DO). The student may choose a major in any medical field. Most medical schools do not have programs in forensic pathology, but some offer courses in the subject. After you’ve obtained your doctoral degree, you must then enter a residency program in pathology and forensic pathology (which is currently a 5-year process). Once your residency is complete, you are then qualified to sit for the exam (given by the American Board of Pathology) to become board certified in pathology and forensic pathology. In all, it takes an additional 8-13 years of education *after* high school to become a medical examiner.

**Medical Examiner Duties**

Medical examiners have several different duties since some of their work takes place at crime scenes, and the other half takes place in the facility or laboratory. Other times, they are called upon in court and must testify in a trial. More specific duties include:

**At the crime scene they may:**

* Examine and document injuries, wounds, etc.
* Determine identity
* Collect remains, body
* Transport body
* Work closely with law enforcement, detectives, etc.

**In the crime lab they may:**

* Perform autopsies
* Determine identity if not found at crime scene
* Examine and document injuries, wounds, etc.
* Collect trace evidence
* Determine manner of death (natural, homicide, suicide, accidental, undetermined)
* Collect and interpret toxicological evidence

**In court they may:**

* Testify for the prosecution
* Testify for the defense

**Alternative Names**

Forensic pathologist; coroner; medical examiner; diener

<http://www.forensicsciencecareers.net/medical-examiner.html>

**Specialists**

There many different specialists that can be called in. Specialists are called in if the evidence requires expert analysis. A brief description of three examples of specialists are described below.

**Forensic Entomologist**

A career in forensic entomology may not be for the faint of heart, but the study of insects on the postmortem body can yield a wealth of information in criminal cases.

Forensic entomology in a medicolegal or medicocriminal context focuses on insects that colonize in human tissue in postmortem situations. Forensic entomology involves estimating the age of insects developing on human remains; specifically, it involves estimating the time of colonization or time when eggs or larvae are deposited on the remains (called the minimum time since colonization) and the time elapsed since insect activity began (called the postmortem interval, or PMI).

Forensic entomology in a medicocriminal context is often used to:

* Establish the geographical location of death
* Associate the victim and suspect to each other
* Identify the sites of trauma
* Determine time of death
* Provide alternative toxicology and DNA samples

Although some forensic entomologists are employed full-time by law enforcement agencies, these forensic scientists most often work on a contract basis when called in to assist medical examiners, coroners, police agencies, and federal agencies answer critical questions pertaining to criminal death investigations.

Forensic entomologist jobs as they relate to a criminal death investigation often involve:

* Responding to the crime scene to document, recover, and identify human remains and to collect and preserve physical an biological evidence
* Studying the various aspects of the insects, including type, growth, developmental stage, or damage caused to the postmortem body to determine time of death
* Studying climate and weather patterns preceding and subsequent to the criminal act as to determine the life stages of the insects
* Determining if insects at the scene were indigenous to the area of were transported by the victim or perpetrator
* Developing organized and accurate entomology reports
* Supervising the handling of all entomological specimens to ensure proper processing, identification, and storage
* Developing procedures for forensic entomological case work, collection and documentation

All evidence collected at the scene of a crime by a forensic entomologist must be collected and stored according to strict guidelines and protocols to ensure it can be admissible in court, if necessary. Law enforcement officials therefore often accompany forensic entomologists to the scene of the crime to ensure that all proper steps are taken during the collection and preservation of evidence.

<http://www.crimesceneinvestigatoredu.org/forensic-entomologist/>

# Forensic Anthropologist

Forensic anthropologists study old bones to determine the age, sex, and medical history, along with other identification factors, of deceased persons. Both a bachelor's and a master's degree in anthropology are required in order for a forensic anthropologist to work. They can work in archaeology or with law enforcement teams.

## Essential Information

Forensic anthropology is a subfield of anthropology. It involves the study of human remains for legal purposes, including police investigations. Forensic anthropologists may face stiff competition in their career field due to the small number of positions. A master's degree is typically needed to work as a forensic anthropologist.

## Job Description

Forensic anthropologists work with law enforcement agencies and assist in processing skeletal evidence. They study bones, a field known as osteology, and profile research subjects by gathering information used to determine the individual's age at death, sex and physical condition. Forensic anthropologists may also assist in excavating and relocating human remains, performing dental analysis, determining time of death, assessing trauma to bones and presenting expert testimony in court. They are expected to use scientific standards in their work.

<http://study.com/articles/Forensic_Anthropologist_Job_Description_Outlook_and_Salary.html>

**Forensic Psychologist**

Interest in forensic psychology has surged in recent years, primarily due to such television programs as “Criminal Minds,” where criminal profilers have an almost psychic ability to give elaborate personality and behavioral descriptions of perpetrators (“UNSUBs”). This is a misconception of the role that forensic psychologists play and leads to confusion about who is a forensic psychologist. Since forensic psychology is a relatively new field within psychology, it is still having growing pains. Thus, it would probably be best to start with a definition.

Most forensic psychology textbook authors describe forensic psychology as having a broad definition and a narrow definition. Forensic psychology, as defined by the American Psychological Association, is the application of clinical specialties to the legal arena. This definition emphasizes the application of clinical psychology to the forensic setting. Christopher Cronin, who has written a well-known textbook on forensic psychology, defines it as “The application of clinical specialties to legal institutions and people who come into contact with the law” (p. 5), again emphasizing the application of clinical skills such as assessment, treatment, evaluation to forensic settings. This is considered a narrow definition. The broad definition of forensic psychology emphasizes the application of research and experimentation in other areas of psychology (e.g., cognitive psychology, social psychology) to the legal arena. This would include applying results from studies in areas such as cognitive psychology to legal questions. Two good examples include Elizabeth Loftus’ many studies on eyewitness identification and Stephen Ceci’s research on children’s memory, suggestibility and competence to testify. Cronin labels this definition “legal psychology” or “The scientific study of the effect of the law on people, and the effect people have on the law.”

Thus, the **practice** of forensic psychology, and perhaps the most frequent duty of forensic psychologists, is the **psychological assessment** of individuals who are involved, in one way or another, with the legal system. Therefore, although it is necessary to have training in law and forensic psychology, the most important skills a forensic psychologist must possess are solid clinical skills. That is, skills like clinical assessment, interviewing, report writing, strong verbal communication skills (especially if an expert witness in court) and case presentation are all very important in setting the foundation of the practice of forensic psychology. With these skills forensic psychologists perform such tasks as threat assessment for schools, child custody evaluations, competency evaluations of criminal defendants and of the elderly, counseling services to victims of crime, death notification procedures, screening and selection of law enforcement applicants, the assessment of post-traumatic stress disorder and the delivery and evaluation of intervention and treatment programs for juvenile and adult offenders. The practice of forensic psychology involves investigations, research studies, assessments, consultation, the design and implementation of treatment programs and expert witness courtroom testimony.

Arguably one of the most interesting assessments for a forensic psychologist is assessment in “mens rea” (insanity) cases. In the U.S., a person cannot be held responsible for a crime if he/she did not possess a “guilty mind” (mens rea) at the time the criminal act was committed. There are several conditions in which the law recognizes that a guilty mind is absent (e.g., self-defense). “Insanity” is not a psychological term but a legal one. The standard for insanity is determined by each state, and there is also a federal standard. A common standard is whether the person knew what he/she was doing was wrong. The forensic psychologist has to determine not how the person is functioning at the present moment, but his/her mental state at the time of the crime. Thus, much of the forensic psychologist’s work is retrospective and must rely on third-party information, collateral contacts and written communications (e.g., statements made at the time of the crime).

Although there are master’s level degrees in forensic psychology, all forensic psychologists must have either a PhD or a PsyD degree from an APA-accredited or Canadian Psychological Association (CPA)-accredited doctoral program. They must also have the equivalent of two years of organized, sequential, supervised professional experience, one year of which is an APA- or CPA-accredited predoctoral internship. Often there are other requirements as well. The candidate can apply for licensure and sit for an oral or written exam (depending on the state where the candidate will be practicing). Practitioners can also become board certified (as diplomates) by the American Board of Forensic Psychology.

Forensic psychology has grown in the past 20 years. It is a broad applied field that offers numerous opportunities to the practitioner. Forensic psychologists work in many different legal environments, writing reports, giving testimony, doing direct treatment or working with therapeutic communities. In his book “Trials of a Forensic Psychologist: A Casebook,” Charles Patrick Ewing gives a clear picture of what it is like to evaluate, write and give testimony in court on difficult criminal cases. In many of Stephen Ceci’s and Elizabeth Loftus’s studies, forensic concerns change the nature of how we conceptualize memory and miscommunication. Forensic psychology is definitely here to stay.

<http://www.apa.org/ed/precollege/psn/2013/09/forensic-psychology.aspx>

**Homicide Investigator/Detective: Requirements, Duties and Career Info**

Homicide investigators require little formal education. Learn about the education, job duties and employment prospects to see if this is the right career for you.

A homicide investigator is not an entry-level position, but a role earned through a promotion after many years of experience working as a police officer. While a bachelor's degree is usually a requirement for working as a homicide investigator at the federal level, a high school diploma is often sufficient education for state and local positions.

**Essential Information**

A homicide investigator, also known as a detective, searches for evidence and clues used to identify suspects in murder cases. Training and experience are required to obtain the skills necessary to become a homicide investigator. Homicide investigators usually have at least a high school diploma; they are experienced police officers who have earned promotion to this job title. Some agencies require a college degree.

**Requirements**

Education requirements for homicide investigators vary depending upon whether the hiring agency is federal, state or local. Generally, state and municipal homicide investigators must have at least a high school education and must also be experienced police officers. Some jurisdictions, and notably federal agencies, also require potential candidates to have some postsecondary education.

Degree programs in criminal justice, criminology and forensic science are commonly found at community colleges and universities, and aspiring homicide investigators may earn an associate degree in two years or a bachelor's degree in four years. In addition, nearly all jurisdictions train investigators at either a regional or state police academy before giving them their first investigative assignment.

Other characteristics like integrity, sense of responsibility and sound judgment are requirements of the job. Some agencies require candidates to take a personality test or interview with a psychiatrist or psychologist. In addition, job applicants may also be required to undergo drug testing or lie detector tests.

**Duties**

In the course of solving a murder case, homicide investigators collect evidence such as DNA and fingerprints at the crime scene. They interview suspects and witnesses who may have information about the crime. They prepare reports of investigation findings and, if necessary, testify in court regarding the investigation.

Other duties that may fall to a homicide investigator during a typical work day might include:

* Collaborating with other law enforcement officials or the U.S. District Attorney
* Serving misdemeanor and felony warrants and arresting suspects
* Preparing and executing search warrants
* Taking witness depositions
* Preparing court papers, including subpoenas and summons

<http://study.com/articles/Homicide_Investigator_Requirements_Duties_and_Career_Info.html>