


FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  GENERAL ORDER	SUBJECT: CRIME AND CIVIL DISASTER SCENES		NUMBER: 523
	EFFECTIVE DATE: January 9, 2023	REVIEW: January 2026	
RESPONSIBLE ENTITY: OPERATIONS SUPPORT BUREAU			<input type="checkbox"/> New Directive <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Replaces: 520.5 <input type="checkbox"/> Revised
ACCREDITATION STANDARDS	CALEA: VLEPSC: OPR.02.01, OPR.05.01		

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this General Order is to establish guidelines and procedures for officer responses to crime and civil disaster scenes.

II. POLICY

It is the policy of the Fairfax County Police Department (FCPD) that access to crime/civil disaster scenes be strictly limited in order to protect life and preserve evidence critical to the successful identification, apprehension, and prosecution of potential offenders. Only those individuals immediately required for investigation of the event shall be granted access to these scenes, and all employees involved in the event should take all appropriate measures to safeguard and preserve the integrity the scene. Large scale scenes may require a multitude of coordinated Department resources, which shall be conducted in accordance with the [Fairfax County Joint Response Action Guide](#). Command and control of the scene will be adjusted as needed, depending upon scene complexity and requested resources.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. Barrier Tape: Tape that encompasses crime and civil disaster scenes, marks perimeters, and identifies potential hazards to first responders. Includes:

1. Red Tape marked “**DANGER DO NOT ENTER**” that establishes and identifies a hazard, hot zone, or other potentially dangerous area.
2. Red Tape marked “**CRIME SCENE-DO NOT CROSS**” that establishes an inner perimeter where actual search and collection of evidence will occur.
3. Yellow Tape marked “**POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS**” that marks the outer perimeters established a crime/civil disaster scene.

- B. Crime/Civil Disaster Scene: Physical area in which a crime/civil disaster occurred and where evidence may be found. The scope of the area will be determined by the course of the investigation in each circumstance and will include the area immediately surrounding where the crime or disaster occurred and any secondary perimeter established away from the scene.
- C. First Responding Supervisor: Supervisor directly responsible for the security of a crime/disaster scene and the support of investigative personnel assigned to the scene. At scenes that require the presence of only one supervisor for command, the first responding supervisor shall act as incident commander and have sole authority for control of a scene, and will ordinarily be the ranking patrol supervisor in the district where the event occurs.
- D. Investigating Officer: The officer, assigned to patrol or investigative duties, who assumes primary responsibility for an investigation at a scene and who directs the progress of the investigation.
- E. Incident Commander: Commander at a crime/disaster scene with overall administrative authority who directs activity in a crime/disaster scene in addition to other Incident Command System commanders and control components as needed and assures all reasonable requests for resources are met.

IV. OFFICER PROCEDURES

- A. Initial Responses: Responding officers to a crime/civil disaster scene shall be responsible for the following:
 1. Initial assessment of the scene and need for additional units, as well as the immediate rendering or summoning of medical assistance to any injured individual as needed and providing for scene security until a supervisor or commander can respond to the location.
 2. Ensuring no physical objects are moved, or evidence collected for any reason (other than to prevent destruction of the item) until directed by the investigating officer or detective.
 3. Controlling access to the scene where unauthorized access would interfere with scene security. Outer perimeters shall be established and designated with yellow barrier tape marked “**POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS.**”
 4. Establishing hot zones as applicable to designate potentially dangerous areas to first responders that are designated with red barrier tape marked

“DANGER DO NOT ENTER.” Individuals may not enter into these areas absent exigent circumstances without approval of the Incident Commander.

5. **Documentation:** All officers who enter into a designated crime/civil disaster scene shall submit a supplemental report in the current Records Management System (RMS).
6. **Media Access:** In accordance with the [Code of Virginia](#), media representatives may enter, at their own risk, any area closed where life, limb, or property may be endangered, provided such entry does not in any way directly hinder police investigations or otherwise obstruct ongoing medical or law enforcement operations.

V. SUPERVISOR PROCEDURES

A. **Initial Response:** Responding supervisors to a crime/civil disaster scene shall be responsible for the following:

1. Assessment of the scene, establishing initial command until relieved by higher authority, and requesting support from the Major Crimes Bureau (MCB), Crime Scene Section (CSS), and other entities as needed.
2. Preventing unauthorized access to the scene and all established perimeters by individuals unless their presence is in furtherance of the investigation or to perform lifesaving measures. Fire and Rescue Department personnel shall be assisted in performing lifesaving measures and patient transports to a medical facility as needed where injured individuals are located at the scene.
3. Ensuring physical objects are not moved and evidence is preserved and only collected at the direction of the investigating officer or detective.
4. Provide updates to the acting Duty Officer and/or Police Liaison Commander (PLC) and forwarding pertinent information for inclusion in the Event Summary Report (ESR).
5. Establishing a command post and staging area as needed.
6. Facilitating pertinent communications with the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) to ensure officers and responding entities are given relevant information in a timely manner.
7. Ensuring that individuals who are denied access to the criminal/civil disaster scene are, whenever possible, given reasonable explanation of the reason for

the denial and provided an alternative route to reach their intended destination if possible. Residents who live in the area of the disaster scene should be provided controlled egress to their homes whenever such egress will not impede the investigation or disrupt ongoing police operations.

VI. INVESTIGATING OFFICERS AND DETECTIVE PROCEDURES

- A. Investigating officers or detectives at a crime/civil disaster scene shall be responsible for the following:
1. All investigative responsibilities in accordance with [FCPD General Order 501](#), Investigative Responsibilities.
 2. Requesting investigative support as necessary through the on scene incident commander.
 3. Direction of personnel within the scene involved in the investigation and/or evidence processing. Where the investigating detective is assigned to either MCB or the Internal Affairs Bureau, access shall also be given to all appropriate investigative supervisors who will determine any needed additional resources that are required.

VII. INCIDENT COMMANDER PROCEDURES

- A. Responding supervisors who assess that a crime/civil disaster scene will require the addition of resources from other Department entities shall notify the Duty Officer in a timely manner. The Duty Officer will coordinate assignment of these resources and respond to the scene and assume command as needed. Where the Duty Officer cannot respond, the highest-ranking patrol supervisor shall serve as incident commander until relieved by higher authority.
- B. Incident commanders shall at a crime/civil disaster scene shall be responsible for the following:
1. Administrative oversight of all personnel assigned to scene investigation and corresponding duties until relieved of command by an officer of superior rank.
 2. Assisting in investigations through responding supervisors and facilitating reasonable requests for resources as needed within the perimeter of the scene.

3. Providing a briefing to responding Public Affairs Bureau personnel, district station commanders, deputy chiefs of police, and/or the Chief of Police as necessary.
4. Assuming responsibility for contacts with arriving media members at the scene as required.
5. Establishment of a command post, and staging area as needed.
6. Ensuring that a scene accountability log is established to record the presence and assignment of all personnel and equipment at the scene and providing for the relief of assigned personnel as needed.

VIII. CRIME SCENE SECTION RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. Responding CSS personnel shall report to the incident commander for recording purposes prior to entering the crime/civil disaster scene and further confer with the investigating officer prior to commencing investigatory activity.
- B. CSS personnel shall evaluate the scene and, as necessary, establish a restricted inner perimeter where actual search and collection of evidence will occur. This perimeter will be designed by red barrier taped marked "**CRIME SCENE-DO NOT CROSS.**" No other individuals will be permitted within this area without express permission of the on scene MCB or CSS detective **and** the MCB and/or CSS supervisor.

IX. CIVIL DISTURBANCE UNIT RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Civil Disturbance Unit (CDU) may be requested to respond for large demonstrations, labor/civil unrest situations, and crowd control for large-scale events in order to minimize threats to public safety and/or damage to property. CDU may be activated at the direction of the Chief of Police or their designee.
- B. Upon arrival at the staging area, the ranking CDU commander shall confer with the on scene incident commander and determine whether or not CDU will be deployed. Once deployed, CDU shall be under the exclusive command and control of the ranking CDU commander on scene.

X. LEGAL REFERENCES

- A. [Va. Code Ann. § 15.2-1714](#), Establishing police lines, perimeters, or barricades.

General Order 523 becomes effective on the above date and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subject.

ISSUED BY:

APPROVED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Davis", written over a horizontal line.

Chief of Police

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Bell", written over a horizontal line.

County Executive