

**GENERAL ORDER**  
FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT



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SUBJECT: CONTROL AT CRIME/CIVIL DISASTER  
SCENES

NUMBER: 520.5

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CANCELS ORDER DATED: 10-1-97

ISSUE DATE: 7-1-11

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I. POLICY

To assure the preservation of evidence critical to the successful identification, apprehension and prosecution of offenders, it shall be the policy of the Police Department to stringently limit access to the scenes of crimes or civil disasters. Only those persons immediately and directly connected to the investigation of the event for which the scene was established shall be granted access.

II. PURPOSE

It is recognized that the majority of scenes maintained by the Department will be controlled by officers of one squad with the need for only limited support from other units. Larger scale crime/disaster scenes, which require coordination of resources from different districts or a commitment of personnel from more than one shift, shall be governed by the procedures outlined in the "Fairfax County Police Department Emergency Operations Plan." Assuming that the situation does not escalate beyond a minor disaster, as defined in the Emergency Plan, command and control also may not develop beyond the first-line supervisory level or the staff duty officer.

This order is issued to provide specific guidance for the control of scenes, which can only be successful when each member of the Department, from the moment of notification, exercises sound judgment to ensure the preservation of such scenes. The presence of personnel who wish to observe a scene to satisfy their personal curiosity is contrary to the best interest of the Department and cannot be tolerated.

This policy shall apply to all persons, regardless of rank or position in the County of Fairfax, any other governmental unit, or the community.

III. TERMINOLOGY/SCOPE OF AUTHORITY

A. Crime/Civil Disaster Scene - The physical area in which a crime or civil disaster occurred or the area in which evidence may be found. The extent of the area will be determined by the course of the investigation in each circumstance. It includes the area immediately surrounding the crime or

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disaster as well as any secondary perimeter established away from the scene which is needed to control access to the scene itself.

- B. First Responding Supervisor - The supervisor directly responsible for the security of a crime/disaster scene and the support of investigative personnel assigned to the scene. At scenes which 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 ordinarily will be the ranking patrol supervisor in the district where the event occurs.
- C. 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.
- D. Incident Commander - Crime/disaster scenes which require the utilization of elements from different district stations which are complex in nature or which require more than one operational period to resolve shall be commanded by an overall Incident Commander in addition to other ICS command and control components as needed. Ordinarily, the Incident Commander will have overall administrative authority, shall direct activity outside the crime/disaster scene proper and within any perimeter established to control access to the vicinity of the scene, and shall be accountable for assuring that all reasonable requests for resources are met.
- E. YELLOW barrier tape that is marked "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS" is used to mark the outer perimeters established at a crime/disaster scene.
- F. RED barrier tape that is marked "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS" is used to establish and identify a hazard, hot zone or other potentially dangerous area to first responders.
- G. RED barrier tape marked "Crime Scene-Do Not Cross" is used to establish an inner perimeter where the actual search and collection of evidence will occur. This perimeter will be established by red barrier tape that is marked.

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IV. FIRST OFFICER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

Regardless of the location, nature and extent of the crime/disaster scene, the first officer to arrive shall have command and control authority and shall:

- A. Render medical assistance to injured persons, as needed.
- B. Provide for the security of the scene until the arrival of a first-line supervisor or commander, or until responsibility for security is assigned to other personnel.
  - 1. No persons shall be permitted within the scene as outlined in Section V. B. 2. of this general order.
  - 2. No physical object shall be moved or evidence collected for any reason, other than safety or for the prevention of the destruction of evidence, until directed by the investigating officer.
  - 3. Scenes involving establishments open to the public shall be closed if access to any portion of the establishment interferes with the security of the scene.
  - 4. Outer perimeters will be established and identified with yellow barrier tape marked "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS."
  - 5. The scene may also dictate the need to establish and identify a hazard, hot zone, or other potentially dangerous area to first responders. These areas shall be established utilizing RED barrier tape that is marked "POLICE LINE DO NOT CROSS." Under no circumstances shall officers / civilians enter the areas which are marked with the red barrier tape without the permission of the Incident Commander.
- C. Assess the scene to determine if additional units are needed for security and if support from the Criminal Investigations Bureau and/or the Crime Scene Section is apparently required. If support is necessary, the officer's first-line supervisor shall be notified.

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V. FIRST RESPONDING SUPERVISOR

- A. The responsibilities of the first responding supervisor shall include:
1. Command of the crime/disaster scene unless specifically relieved by an officer of superior rank or by relief at the termination of a tour of duty.
  2. All measures to prevent any unauthorized access within the perimeter of the scene or any other secondary perimeter required to assure that Police and Fire and Rescue Department personnel operations may proceed effectively.
    - a. No persons shall be permitted within a crime scene unless their presence will directly further the investigation being conducted, except personnel involved in a lifesaving role. All persons shall report to the first responding supervisor before entering the scene.
    - b. All persons permitted within a crime scene shall submit a supplemental report providing details of their activity and function at the scene.
    - c. Fire and Rescue Department personnel shall be assisted in performing any lifesaving effort if injured persons are found at the scene, and shall not be hampered until their task is concluded. At the time they have completed their duties, the first responding supervisor shall reestablish restriction of access to the scene, limited only to those actively involved in the investigation.
  3. Assure that no physical object is moved or collection of evidence occurs, unless at the direction of the investigating officer.
  4. Request assistance from the Criminal Investigations Bureau, Crime Scene Section, or any other needed support elements.
  5. Notify and brief the duty officer and/or police liaison commander in all circumstances which may be significant for inclusion in the Event

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Summary Report (ESR) or which may require notification of authorities outside the Police Department.

6. Assist the investigating officer and support elements in the conduct of the investigation. Assistance shall include expediting all reasonable requests for additional resources for conduct of the investigation.
7. Establish a command post, as needed.
8. Control and limit the communications with the Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC) originating from units at the crime/disaster scene; and also assure that (DPSC) personnel are given adequate information so that they may provide sufficient assistance.
9. Assure that civilians denied passage through the area are, whenever possible, given a reasonable explanation of the reason for the denial and are provided with directions detailing alternative routes to reach their destination, if available. In the case of residents who live in the area of the crime/disaster, provide controlled egress to their homes whenever such egress will not impede or damage conduct of the investigation or disrupt the crime scene.

VI. INVESTIGATING OFFICER

- A. The responsibilities of the investigating officer, whether uniform or plainclothes, shall include:
  1. All responsibilities provided in General Order 501.2, Paragraph II. B, Investigative Responsibilities.
  2. Requesting all support necessary for adequate investigation through the first responding supervisor or incident commander.
  3. Directing all personnel assigned within the scene who are involved in the investigation or processing being conducted.

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4. Identifying or causing to be identified and recorded all personnel within the scene together with their assigned function.

B. In all scenes in which the investigating officer is assigned to the Criminal Investigation Bureau or the Internal Affairs Bureau, appropriate investigative supervisors shall have access to the scene. The supervisor shall determine if additional investigative resources are needed and provide assistance as needed to the investigating officer.

VII. INCIDENT COMMANDERS

A. In circumstances in which it becomes apparent to a first responding supervisor that control of a crime/disaster scene will necessitate the use of resources from different districts or personnel from another shift, the supervisor shall contact the duty officer. The duty officer shall coordinate the assignment of personnel and equipment to the scene. The duty officer shall respond and become the Incident Commander whenever possible. If the duty officer cannot respond, the ranking patrol supervisor shall be incident commander until otherwise relieved by higher authority.

B. The incident commander's responsibilities shall include:

1. Overall administrative command of all personnel assigned to duties related to activity within and surrounding the scene.

2. Assist the conduct of the investigation through the first responding supervisor and provide all reasonable requests for resources for use within the perimeter of the crime/disaster scene.

3. Brief the public information officer, the district station commander, the deputy chiefs of police, or the Chief of Police, as necessary.

4. Request the public information officer to respond and assume responsibility for contact with members of the media present at the scene, if required.

5. Establish a command post, as needed.

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6. Ensure that a Scene Accountability Log is established to record the presence and assignment of all personnel and equipment at the scene and provide for the relief of personnel and deployment of new personnel assigned to the scene.
7. The incident commander shall continue the assignment unless specifically relieved of command by an officer of superior rank, or relieved at the termination of the tour of duty by an officer of equal rank.

VIII. CRIME SCENE SECTION

Crime Scene Section personnel shall report to the incident commander or first responding supervisor to ensure knowledge of their presence for recording. The Crime Scene Section personnel shall confer with the investigating officer prior to the start of any activity. The investigating officer shall establish the scope of the processing needed, and rely upon the expert knowledge of the Crime Scene personnel for the most practical method to be used to complete the processing.

After conferring with the investigating officer, Crime Scene personnel shall evaluate the scene perimeter and, if necessary, establish an inner perimeter where the actual search and collection of evidence will occur. This perimeter will be established by red barrier tape that is marked "Crime Scene-Do Not Cross." No persons shall be permitted within this area without the express permission of the on-scene CIB or Crime Scene detective and the CIB or Crime Scene supervisor.

IX. CIVIL DISTURBANCE UNIT

The Civil Disturbance Unit (CDU) is a non-standing section of the Patrol Bureau. This unit has the capability to respond to large demonstrations, labor/civil unrest situations, and provide crowd control for major events. Specially equipped officers from this unit will provide an organized response to these incidents in such a manner as to minimize threats to public safety and damage to property.

- A. The CDU may be activated by the Chief of Police or designated personnel.

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- B. Upon arrival at the staging area, the ranking CDU commander will consult with the incident commander on the scene and make a determination as to whether CDU will be deployed.
- C. Once the CDU commander has been briefed by the incident commander and has been committed to action, the unit shall be under the exclusive command and control of ranking CDU commander on the scene.

Other guidelines are delineated in the Civil Disturbance Unit's Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

X. ACCREDITATION STANDARDS REFERENCE

VLEPSC

OPR.

05.01	05.06
05.02	05.07
05.03	05.08

This General Order becomes effective July 1, 2011 and rescinds all previous rules and regulations pertaining to the subject.

ISSUED BY:

APPROVED BY:

Chief of Police

County Executive