


NORTHAMPTON POLICE DEPARTMENT		
Administration & Operations Manual		
Policy: Investigative Photographing and Fingerprinting		AOM: O-407
Massachusetts Police Accreditation Standards Referenced: [83.1.1], [83.2.4], [83.2.4.a&b], [83.2.1], [83.2.2], [83.2.3], [83.2.4.h], [83.2.4.a]		Issuing Authority <hr/> John D. Cartledge Chief of Police
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I. Introductory Discussion

The purpose of this chapter is to establish operating guidelines for photographing and fingerprinting a crime scene.

II. Crime Scene Technicians (CST)

Responsibilities of Crime Scene Technicians (CST): The Northampton Police Department has designated crime scene specialists who have been trained and are proficient in forensic photography and fingerprinting. These CST’s will be responsible for processing a crime scene by taking all necessary photographs, gathering all available fingerprints, and assisting in the collection of evidence from the scene. CST’s are on call 24 hours a day. [83.1.1] [83.2.4]

1. Upon selection as a CST, specialized training shall be completed in the following areas:
 - a. Basic and Advanced Fingerprint Classification/Comparison
 - b. Basic and Advanced Digital Photography
 - c. Latent and Advanced Latent Fingerprint Recovery Techniques with Courtroom Testimony
 - d. Crime Scene Investigation
2. **Authority to Process Crime Scenes:** The authority to process a crime scene will be granted by the on-duty Officer-in-Charge (OIC), the Detective Bureau Commander (DBC), or the Operations Division Commander (ODC).
3. **Access to Equipment/Supplies:** CST's will have access to equipment and supplies necessary for the taking of photographs and for the recovery of fingerprints during crime scene processing. [83.2.4,a,b]
4. **Scheduled Absences:** CST's shall submit a written and/or electronic e-mail notification of absence (i.e. vacation, training) to the Supervisor in Charge of Crime Scene Services and the OIC of the Detective Bureau as soon as practical prior to the expected absence.

III. Definitions & General Guidelines

- A. Investigative Photographs: Investigative photographs are those which are made to record an object or event, or to clarify a point which is related to a particular investigation. Time is an essential factor and photography may preempt other aspects of the investigation.
 1. Photographic equipment must be in a constant state of readiness. Cameras will be identified by number with the master list of each camera identifying the make, model and serial number of each camera.[83.2.2] [83.2.4,a]
 2. The most important element in crime scene photography is maintaining perspective. Proper photographic perspective produces the same impression of relative position and size of objects as when they are viewed with the naked eye. Any distortion in the perspective will reduce, or destroy altogether, the evidentiary value of a photograph.
 3. Photographs are admissible in court if testimony can establish that they accurately depict the scene. The accuracy of the photograph always relates to the degree to which it represents the appearance of the subject matter as to form, tone, color, and scale.
 4. All photographs of victims shall be in compliance with Massachusetts General Law Chapter 271 § 51. M.G.L. 271 § 51 states the following;
 - a. No first responder who responds to or is otherwise present at the scene of a crime, accident or other emergency in the performance of the first responder's official duties shall take a photographic or digital image of a victim of a crime, accident or emergency unless the first responder takes the photographic or digital image in the performance of the first

responder's official duties, or upon the consent of the victim or, if the victim is unable to consent, an immediate family member of the victim; provided, however, that this subsection shall not apply to the use by a first responder of body-worn cameras or cameras mounted on a first responder's vehicle.

- b. No first responder shall, other than in the performance of the first responder's official duties, transmit, disseminate or otherwise make available to a third person a photographic or digital image of a victim of a crime, accident or emergency without the consent of the victim or, if the victim is unable to consent, an immediate family member of the victim; provided, however, that this subsection shall not apply to the use by a first responder of body-worn cameras or cameras mounted on a first responder's vehicle.

B. Investigative Fingerprinting: Fingerprints are one of the most valuable types of physical evidence. Fingerprints of an offender are found on a wide variety of surfaces and in various states. In all cases, however, the prints are fragile and susceptible to destruction by any careless act. They are also in many instances difficult to locate.

C. Camera Media: For the purposes of definition, camera media may include any type of digital media.

IV. Processing the Crime Scene [83.2.1] [83.2.2] [83.2.3]

A. The process of photographing and fingerprinting a crime scene is as follows:

1. Examine the Scene: Make a determination as to what equipment is necessary to photograph the scene.
2. Photograph the Entire Scene: [83.2.4.h] In coordination with the On-Scene Commander, photograph the entire scene, including but not limited to, victims, crowd, vehicles and all evidence.
 - a. Objects must not be moved until they have been photographed from all necessary angles.
 - b. Because of the importance of scale, distance, and perspective in interpreting the photographs taken at the scene, it is a good procedure to include a ruler or other scale of measurement in the photograph, when practical. An identical photograph without the scale indicator will also be taken.
 - c. The same camera position, lighting, and camera settings should be used.
 - d. Alternately, the dimensions of a fixed object in the scene can be taken to provide a scale of reference.
3. Identify and Collect all Fingerprints: [83.2.4.a] take photographs of any

latent fingerprints before lifting, and identify and label those fingerprints to be processed.

- a. **Photographing Fingerprints:** As a general rule, all latent fingerprints should be photographed before they are lifted.
 - b. **Search All Surface Areas:** It is imperative that CST's thoroughly search all surface areas in and around the crime scene that might retain fingerprints.
 - c. **Place Prints on Card:** Place lifted fingerprints upon the appropriate card, and complete all required information on the back of the card.
 - d. **Use Proper Procedures:** Fingerprints shall be processed, developed, lifted and labeled in accordance with procedures set forth in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's *The Science of Fingerprints* Guidebook, which has been adopted by the Northampton Police Department. [83.2.3]
4. Assist in the Collection and Preservation of Evidence:[83.2.4.d] CST's may be directed to assist in the collection of evidence process by a Supervisor or Officer-in-Charge of the investigation (See *AOM O401 Evidence & Property Identification & Collection*).
5. Complete Proper Procedures for the Retention of Digital Photographs: If images were taken with a digital camera, the following procedures will apply after processing the scene:
- a. **Transfer of Digital Images:** Upon completion of processing the crime scene, prior to accessing the photos, the officer must transfer the images from the camera media to the specific offense number within the departmental computer data system. In all serious cases (i.e., homicides, arson, sexual assaults, etc.) the officer will also transfer the digital images to a non-rewriteable. No digital photos are to be left on a media card/disc in the camera after the successful transfer is made to a CD or other storage device and the departmental computer data system. If the officer is not capable of making such a transfer, they shall tag and enter the camera media into evidence and notify the Detective Bureau Commander that the digital photos on the flashcard need to be transferred. The officer must include the NPD computer offense number on the notification. The Detective Bureau Commander will then assign an officer to transfer the images in accordance with these procedures.
 - b. **Enter CD/Storage Device into Evidence:** The officer transferring the digital images will then tag and enter the compact disk into evidence.
 - c. **Erase Camera Media:** Once the images on the digital camera media have been successfully transferred and photos printed, the digital camera media shall be erased and put back into service.
 - d. **No Original Image May Be Altered:** Any image needing adjustments for color balance, brightness or contrast should be adjusted using the software tools available. Adjustments made to any image shall be recorded in a supplemental incident report indicating what adjustments were made. The

adjusted image shall be saved as a new image and the original CD/Storage Device shall be retained. Adjustment(s) to images shall only be completed under the direction of the Detective Bureau Commander.

6. Complete Photo-Id Ledgers & Reports: Upon completion of processing the crime scene, the CST will be responsible for making the required entries into the photo-id ledgers as well as all necessary reports and supplemental reports indicating the officer's activities at the crime scene which shall include the camera # used, the settings of the camera, if any, as well as the lighting conditions. CST's will be responsible for completing the Case Management Ledger (form O-407.a) regarding their activities at the scene as well as the Supplemental Case Ledger (form O-407.b) regarding their follow-up case activities. [83.2.2]
7. Report Any Problems: Any mistakes, errors or equipment failures will be logged and the Detective Bureau Commander will be notified of such deficiencies in writing.

Any evidence, fingerprints or photographs that have been destroyed, obscured, altered or deficient shall be immediately reported to the Detective Bureau Commander. The officer reporting shall prepare a complete report addressing the problem or error.

V. Request for CST Services

All items brought into the Northampton Police Department by patrol that need CST attention shall log into evidence. A "Request For CSS Services" shall be completed and left in the mailbox of the Supervisor in charge of Crime Scene Services.

VI. Storage [83.2.2] [83.2.3]

- A. Fingerprints: All fingerprints collected during the processing of a crime scene shall be tagged as evidence and stored in the Photo-Id Room. All fingerprinted items/evidence shall be stored in accordance with procedures set forth in *AOM 0401 Evidence & Property Identification & Collection*.
- B. Photographs: Photos and/or videotapes taken of a crime scene shall be labeled and/or tagged as evidence and kept in either the Records Bureau or with all other evidence as prescribed in *AOM 0401 Evidence & Property Identification & Collection*.