



# COTTAGE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT

## GENERAL ORDER

**SUBJECT: PHOTOGRAPHING AND VIDEOTAPING CRIME SCENES**

**NEW REVISED RESCINDS**

APPROVED: *GM*

GEORGIA MILTENBERGER  
ACTING CHIEF OF POLICE

Effective Date 8/22/2018

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### **I. POLICY**

The Department recognizes that not all crime scenes require photographs. However, photographs of evidence at a crime scene and/or of the crime scene itself, either "still" photographs or videotape, are powerful tools for officers to use to enhance an investigation. The photographs/videotapes, if they fairly and accurately depict the scene and the evidence observed by the officer(s), are virtually always admissible in court.

### **II. PROCEDURES FOR PHOTOGRAPHING CRIME SCENES**

- A. Officers will evaluate each and every crime scene or incident to which they respond to determine the need for "still" photographs.
  - 1. If an officer determines that the taking of photographs would document person(s) and/or evidence at a crime scene especially that which is short-lived, the officer will take photographs or arrange to have photographs taken.
  - 2. Whenever possible, photographs will be taken before evidence is processed and collected in order to document where the evidence was found at the crime scene.
  - 3. If the first officer on the scene does not have a camera or wants the scene to be photographed with equipment beyond the resources of this Department, the officer should contact the PGPD Forensic Services Division.

4. Until the arrival of PGPD F.S.D., officers will ensure that the crime scene is protected pursuant to the guidelines and procedures outlined in General Order.
5. All aspects of the crime scene will be photographed in an effort to fairly and accurately depict the evidence or crime scene.
6. A "scale" or other reference object will be used in the photographic field for relative size comparison, in addition to any "non-scaled" photographs.

The most practical way to show an object's size or dimension is by photographing it above a ruler or yardstick.

7. Prior to the taking of photographs which show dimension (using a ruler, yardstick, etc., in the photographic field), the photographer should take photographs of the scene without showing dimension to avoid the possibility of a challenge to the photographs in court.
8. Whenever possible, photographs of evidence will show the evidence's surroundings (how it relates to the scene).
9. When evidence is photographed by itself (not in its surroundings), the photographer will ensure that an appropriate background is used i.e., dark-colored object against a light-colored background, etc.
10. When photographs have been taken with an instant-developing camera i.e., Polaroid, the photographer will indicate on the reverse side of each photograph the following:
  - The date and time of the photo,
  - The name of the photographer,
  - The case number
  - A brief description of what the photo depicts, and
  - Any other remarks or notes the photographer believes would be beneficial to refresh his/her recollection at a later date.

B. Videotaping of crime scenes may be used in addition to "still" photographs. The F.S.D. of the PG PD has videotaping capability.

1. When video equipment is used, the camera's correct time and date will be checked to illustrate and ensure the accuracy and integrity of what was taped.

2. Once the video process has been completed, the video tape will be appropriately labeled by the camera operator to indicate:
  - Camera operator's name,
  - Date of the video tape,
  - Beginning and ending times of taping,
  - Complete address of incident,
  - Location within the address (i.e., bed room, etc.), and
  - Any other remarks.
3. The camera operator will view the video tape as soon as possible after taping to ensure that it is suitable for court.
4. The video tape will be submitted to the Property/Evidence Custodian for storage and chain-of-custody.