Clue Conscientiousness, Crime
Scene Preservation and Article
Collection
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Introduction

- Recognizing Clues
  - powers of observation
- Handling Clues/Articles

This training covers Clue Conscientiousness, Crime Scene Preservation and Article Collection. The topics to be discussed are how to recognize clues, determining if that clue is actually something the person being searched for may have dropped; how to protect a suspected crime scene and if requested, how to collect an article.

The methods discussed are those used by the Arlington County Police Department. Each agency may do some things slightly differently, however, the basics of Chain of Custody, Evidence, etc. are recognized by all Law Enforcement Agencies.
Vocabulary

- Probable Cause
- Chain of Custody
- Evidence
- Responsible Agency (R.A.)

Some terms that you will hear throughout this presentation are listed here.

Probable Cause

Probable Cause is a set of conditions or circumstances that lead a reasonable person to believe that a crime has been committed, and that a certain individual has committed it.

Chain of Custody

This is a written record of who had anything to do with a piece of evidence. If you hand it to someone, make a note of it in your notebook. If you relinquish custody to someone, get that person's signature and keep it in your notebook.

Evidence

Any item or statement that proves that crime has occurred and that a certain individual had committed that crime.
Overview

- Personnel and Dog Safety
- Any Article or Clue Discovered is Evidence

The most important thing to keep in mind throughout this discussion is safety. There isn’t a clue or article that could be discovered that is worth getting hurt over.

Another thing to keep in mind is that anything that is found will have some type of evidentiary value to it. The people that are being searched for will be considered victims of one sort or another; until it is proven that there was no criminal action involved. The information developed by the local agency will lead them to believe whether or not a crime has occurred. Even that could change in the middle of the operation if new information is developed. Always treat anything that you find as evidence.
Steps

- Evaluate the Scene
- Do Not Touch Anything
- Place Flagging Tape Around the Area

The first step in identifying a clue is seeing it. One of the best ways to hide something is in plain sight. The dogs will find any article that is out there (sooner or later), but a clue could be anything in the woods...a footprint, disturbed soil, a broken branch, blood stains on a tree, etc.

chances are that if your attention is drawn to something, it is because is is not quite right...something about the area is different, that is how the most insignificant clue is found.

Once you identify a possible clue, the next step is to determine if it has anything to do with the person you are searching for. Most animal tracks are easy to distinguish from a person's footprint. Things that would not be easy to distinguish are blood or hair. Before calling base to report the discovery of a clue, look around, see if there is something else near by that may firm up your belief as to what the item is.

If you decide that that item is related to the search, call it in, and treat the area as a crime scene.
Steps

- Photograph The Area
  - Overall
- Take Detailed notes
- Attempt to Keep Any Unnecessary Personnel from Entering the Scene
  - maintain until the R.A. takes over

Taking pictures of the area around where the clue was found will assist the investigators in handling the case. If you carry a camera as part of your gear, and are willing to lose what ever maybe on the film, take a few pictures of the area. Keep in mind that your main concern should be protecting the area...if you do not want to do this, it is not required.

One thing that you can do is to write down what the area, and the clue looked like when you found it. Include in your notes the circumstances, if the dog found it, it's condition, if you or your dog handled the item and anything else that you believe may be important to the scene.

The most important thing you will be asked to do is secure the scene. In securing the scene, attempt to prevent anyone who does not need to be there from entering the area. If someone insists on entering the area, do not put yourself in a position where you may be harmed. Take the person's name and what other information they are willing to give you, and write it in your notebook.

In deciding how much area to tape off, use your best judgement. More is always better then too little. In general, the area secured should be 20 feet all around the item.
Collecting Articles

- Use Latex Gloves to Handle Items
- Place the Article in a Bag
- Date, Time, Location, Name

If asked to collect an article, the first thing to do is put on some type of gloves, preferably latex. This will protect you from anything that may be harmful that maybe on the article. It will also protect what ever evidence maybe on the article. If the item or scene is something you really think the R.A. needs to take a look at explain the situation, request that someone from the agency come to your location, and leave everything as you found it.

Some of the things you would not want to pick up are spent bullet casings, bones, bloody clothing, weapons, etc.
Relinquishing The Scene

- If Photographs were taken hand the film to the R.A.
- Keep Your Notes in a Note Book that Has Not Had Pages Removed, Do Not Remove Pages from that book
- Turn Over Any Collected Articles To the R.A.
  - Receipt

When a representative of the Responsible Agency arrives, they will take charge of the scene. If you took pictures hand the film to that person. Record their name in your notebook. Also brief them of the conditions you found, where you walked, etc. If someone entered the scene prior to the R.A.'s arrival, let him know that information also. If you were able to get it,

The importance of keeping your notebook intact is that it can be used for your advantage if you are called to court. If you use a notebook where pages have been torn from it, the lawyers could use that as a means to indicate that the notes may have been tampered with, or re-written, which in a criminal case could lead to the entire case being thrown out.

If the R.A. requested that you pick up what you found, it's still important to mark the area, but they will probably not come out to the scene unless they need to follow up on what you reported. Take the item back to Base, find a representative from the R.A., and turn the property over to them. Get that person's signature in your note book. Your comments should read something like, "Turned article ____ over to <person's name> of <R.A.'s Dept.> at <date and time>."
**Going To Court**

- Do Not Talk To Anyone but the Commonwealth’s Attorney about the Case.

Speaking of going to court, if you are ever requested to testify at a criminal trial, obtain a Subpoena from the court.

Review your notes before taking the Stand. If your memory becomes exhausted on the stand, be prepared to look at your notes. The defense or the prosecution can make a motion to have your notebook taken and viewed in its entirety. Be careful what you record in this notebook. Before leaving the witness room, open the book to the pages regarding the case.

It's important that you do not talk to anyone about the case other then the Commonwealth's Attorney. Discussing the case outside of the witness stand, could lead to charges of witness tampering, causing the case to be dismissed.
Today's Training

- Area 1
- Area 2
- Area 3

In today's training, we have set up three areas to give you some experience in identifying clues and collecting articles. Each scenario is just a little different. Use your judgment, and common sense as you would if this were a real search.
Summary

- Don't Touch Anything
- Keep Detailed Notes
- Do Not Remove Pages from your Note Book
- Attempt to Prevent Unnecessary Persons from Entering a Suspected Crime Scene
- Don't Break the Chain of Custody