

Best Practice Recommendation for Initial Response at Scenes by Law Enforcement Officers



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

This best practice recommendation provides law enforcement officers (LEOs) with clear and comprehensive guidelines for their initial response to incidents that may become the subject of criminal or civil litigation. Along with [OSAC 2022-N-0025](#), it focuses on the initial response and scene securement to provide a seamless transition for subsequent crime scene investigators (CSI). The requirements and recommendations build on the foundational principles for scene investigation and reconstruction in [ANSI/ASB 159, 1st Ed., 2024](#).

Protocols for a complete scene investigation are not included in this standard. These best practice recommendations are intended to inform individual agency protocols regarding how LEOs respond to, approach, and enter a scene with a focus on evidence integrity and consideration for safety, security, and medical intervention.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Every scene has the potential to yield evidence that may be needed in a criminal or civil investigation. Guidance is provided for preserving the scene and evidence integrity until a designated person or CSI personnel can respond.

In addition, recommendations are provided for preventing additional injuries or loss of life to the public and other responders and for delivering medical attention when required with minimal scene contamination.



HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This best practice recommendation addresses generally accepted professional principles and practices to be used by LEOs whose primary responsibility is initial response and securing the scene. It is not intended to replace knowledge, skills, education, training, and experience. It does not address scene investigation and evidence collection.

Any actions taken and any known changes to the scene should be documented and must be relayed to those responsible for the investigation during the scene investigation.

This best practice recommendation covers the following actions of the initial responding LEO:

- Arrival at the scene
- Mitigating actions to minimize safety risks for all participants while minimizing contamination
- Provision of necessary medical intervention
- Assessment of needed resources
- Establishment of scene containment and control
- Preservation of evidence for subsequent scene investigators
- Detailed briefing and scene relinquishment to investigators
- Documentation of actions and observations

