“Oh, how simple it would all have been had I been here before they came like a herd of buffalo and wallowed all over it.”

—A. Conan Doyle, The Boscombe Valley Mystery, 1892
Objectives

You will understand:

The steps to take when processing a crime scene.
That type of evidence determines what packaging should be used.
Why the chain of custody must be preserved.

You will be able to:

Isolate, record, and search for evidence at a mock crime scene.
Collect and package evidence at a mock crime scene using proper forensic procedures.
Corpus Delicti
“Body of the Crime”

Authorities must prove:
- That a crime occurred
- That the person charged with the crime was responsible for the crime

Top reasons for committing a crime
- Money
- Revenge
- Emotion—love, hate, anger

Source of evidence
- Body
- Primary and/or secondary crime scene
- Suspect(s)
Crime Scene Team

A group of professionals trained in a variety of special disciplines

Team members

- First police officer on the scene
- Medics (if necessary)
- Investigator(s)
- Medical examiner (if necessary)
- Photographer and/or field evidence technician
- Lab experts
Crime Scene Investigation

Based on the *scientific method*, the *Locard Exchange Principle*, logic, and forensic techniques

Involves:

- **Recognition**—scene survey, documentation, collection
- **Identification**—classification of evidence
- **Individualization**—comparison testing, evaluation, and interpretation
- **Reconstruction**—sequencing events, reporting, and presenting
Processing a Crime Scene

Isolate and secure the scene

Document the scene

Search for evidence

Collect and package evidence, maintaining the chain of custody

Submit evidence to the crime lab for analysis
First Officer on the Scene

A Assess the crime scene and assist the injured

D Detain the witness

A Arrest the perpetrator

P Protect the crime scene

T Take notes
Crime Scene Survey

Walk-through—performed by the crime scene investigator, the first officer, and sometimes the lead detective

Purpose:
- Mentally prepare a reconstruction theory
- Note any transient or conditional evidence that could change over time
- Note environmental and weather conditions
- Note points of entry or exit, as well as paths of travel within the crime scene
- Record initial observations of who, what, where, when, and how
- Identify special needs within the crime scene for personnel, precautions, or equipment and notify superior officers or other agencies
Documentation

Notes—date, time, description of the location, weather and environmental conditions, description of the crime, location of the evidence relative to other key points, the names of all people involved, modifications that have occurred, and other relevant information

Photography—photos of scene and surroundings; mid-range to close-up photos with various angles of each piece of evidence; photos as viewed by any witnesses

Sketches—inclusion of date; time; scale; reference points; distance measurements; names of investigators, victims, suspects; a legend (key)

Videography—allows for narration (non-subjective) and different perspectives
Search Methods

**Line or strip method**—best in large, outdoor scenes

**Grid method**—basically a double-line search; effective, but time-consuming

**Zone method**—most effective in houses or buildings; teams are assigned small zones for searching

**Wheel or ray method**—best on small, circular crime scenes

**Spiral method**—may move inward or outward; best used where there are no physical barriers
Crime Scene Sketch

Date: August 14, 2005
Time: 11:35 am
Location: 4358 Rockledge Dr., St. Louis, Mo.

Criminalist: Ann Wilson
Collecting and Packaging Evidence

One individual should be designated as the evidence collector to ensure that the evidence is collected, packaged, marked, sealed, and preserved in a consistent manner, maintaining the chain of custody.

Each item must be placed in a separate container, sealed, and labeled.

The most fragile evidence is collected and packaged first.

Different types of evidence require specific or special collection and packaging techniques.

The body is the property of the coroner or medical examiner; collection of evidence on the body is done by that department.
Packaging

Most items should be packaged in a primary container and then placed inside a secondary one.

Pill bottles, vials, manila envelopes, and plastic bags are good for most evidence. Trace evidence may be placed on a piece of paper which is then folded in a particular way called a “druggist’s fold.” These are then placed inside other containers such as paper bags, plastic bags, canisters, packets, or envelopes, depending on the type and size of the evidence.
Chain of Custody

There must be a written record of all people who have had possession of an item of evidence, beginning at the time of collection.

The evidence container must be marked for identification.
The collector’s initials should be placed on the seal.
If evidence is turned over to another person, the transfer must be recorded.
Crime Scene Reconstruction

**Stages**

- Data collection
- Hypothesis formation
- Examination, testing, and analysis
- Determination of the significance of the evidence
- Theory formulation
Investigators

“The wise forensic investigator will always remember that he must bring all of his life experiences and logic to find the truth. This means common sense, informed intuition, and the courage to see things as they are. Then he must speak honestly about what it adds up to.”

—Dr. Henry Lee
Chief Emeritus for Scientific Services and the former Commissioner of Public Safety for the State of Connecticut
The Medical Examiner and the Coroner

A medical examiner is a medical doctor, usually a pathologist, and is appointed by the governing body of the area. There are 400 forensic pathologists throughout the U.S.

A coroner is an elected official who usually has no special medical training. In four states, the coroner is a medical doctor.
Medical Examiner’s Responsibilities

Identify the deceased
Establish the time and date of death
Determine a medical cause of death (the injury or disease that resulted in the person dying)
Determine the mechanism of death (the physiological reason that the person died)
Classify the manner of death
   Natural
   Accidental
   Suicide
   Homicide
   Undetermined
Notify the next of kin
The Corpse

“The way I see it, being dead is not terribly far off from being on a cruise ship. Most of your time is spent lying on your back. The brain has shut down. The flesh begins to soften. Nothing much new happens, and nothing is expected of you.”

People in the News

Dr. Michael M. Baden is a renowned pathologist and was the Chief Medical Examiner in New York City and for Suffolk County.

Dr. Baden was on the panel that investigated the assassinations of president John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He has been involved as an expert in forensic pathology in many cases of international interest, including:

- The remains of Tsar Nicholas of Russia and his family
- The Claus von Bülow murder trial
- Expert witness for the defense in the O. J. Simpson trial
- Reautopsy of Medgar Evers, civil rights leader
- Reexamination of the Lindbergh kidnapping and murder
- Autopsies of the victims of TWA Flight 800

Dr. Baden is the host of HBO's *Autopsy* series and is featured on many of the crime talk shows.
More Information

For additional information on crime scene investigation, check out truTV’s Crime Library:

www.crimelibrary.com/criminal_mind/forensics/crimescene/5.html

On Michael Baden and the autopsy:

www.crimelibrary.com/criminal_mind/forensics/autopsy/1.html