“Did You Step In It?”

Crime Scene Awareness for the First Responder

October 19, 2013

Pulse Check Conference

Douglas J. Wildermuth
NREMT-P, CIC
Think about it...

How often are we at crime scenes?

When do we know we are at a crime scene?
Overview of Course

- Intended to review and familiarize the first responder with the common pitfalls of scene management and the evidence collection component.

- To provide protective measures at future scenes.
A location where a crime has been committed or any place that evidence relating to a crime may be found.

The 3 Headed Juggernaut
Is There Fighting Among Us?
It Exists Everywhere
Conflict Occurs

When we don’t respect the roles of all responders.
Knowing Your Roles

Emergency Medical Services
&
Fire Departments

- Patient care
- Patient extrication
- Patient transport
Knowing Their Roles

Law Enforcement

- **Scene Safety**
- Conduct a criminal investigation that includes:
  - Identify Evidence
  - Prevent Contamination of Crime Scene & Evidence
  - Gather Statements

- GOAL: Attain PROBABLE CAUSE for arrest proceedings (if alive) and/or let the evidence speak on behalf of the deceased.
Law Enforcement Approach

- Starts when dispatched and continues to arrival on scene.
Identifying Evidence

Evidence is identified as:

- An outward sign
- Something that furnishes proof (i.e. Testimony)
- One who bears witness

(Webster’s Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary – Merriam Webster)

Types of Evidence:

- Fingerprints
- Blood and Bodily Fluids
- Hairs & Fibers
- Wounds
- Observations & Statements
Fingerprints are unique
• Deltas, Ridges & Lines creates Arch(s) & Whorl(s) & Loop Patterns

Latent prints are never simple to attain
• Smooth and non-porous substances (i.e. glass) are best however there are other ways to attain prints (i.e. - cyanoacrylate).
Footprints
Blood & Bodily Fluids

- Blood Typing

- DNA (DeoxyriboNucleic Acid)
  - The biological molecule that carries genetic information from one generation to the next
Inherited from Mom & Dad
Only identical twins have the same DNA
Does not change over time
Same within every cell in the body
Where Can We Find DNA?

Any item with possible biological residue:

- Blood
- Semen/Sperm
- Hair
- Tissue
- Bones
- Organs
- Tooth Pulp
- Saliva
- Sweat
- Skin Cells
- Urine
- Feces
- Fingernails
Where Can We Find DNA?
Other Items Containing DNA

- Cigarette butts
- Beverage containers
  - Straws
- Chewing Gum
- Latex Gloves
- Food items (pizza crusts, sandwiches, chicken/rib bones)
Issues with DNA

- Severity of the case?
- Has it been degraded?
- Has it been collected properly?
- Was the crime scene contaminated?
How often do we walk in residences and grab
Forensic Scientist Edmond Locard

- "Everywhere you go, you take something with you, and you leave something behind."
- At the lab, Forensic Scientist will evaluate the hairs to verify that they are human and have root material for DNA.
- Carpet and Clothing Fibers can also be analyzed to determine the types of materials that people came in contact with.
Penetrating and/or blunt trauma
Penetrating Wound
Soot on hands is indicative of what?
Gathering Statements

- Patients position
- Patients Injuries
- Conditions at scene
  - Lights on or off?
  - Curtains?
  - Signs of forced entry?
- Statements of persons at scene
- Statements of patient/victim
- Dying Declarations
“Talking To The Cops”

- What can we discuss with law enforcement?
  - DOH Policy Statement 08-02 - Regarding Prehospital Patient Confidentiality

- Why would you not want to assist law enforcement?

- Put yourselves in the victims shoes?
Prevent Contamination of Crime Scene & Evidence

- Starts with Understanding of each others roles. You will all be in a crime scene.

- Identifying The Scene…Or the threat! Let's think like they do.

- Be aware of your surroundings and assess the scene. Avoid the “Routine” thinking.
#1 Threat... The Human Threat
Scene Size Up – Think of the warning signs:

- Past History of problems or violence
- Known drug or gang area
- Loud noises or items breaking
- Seeing or hearing fighting
- Intoxication or drug use
- Dangerous pets
- Unusual silence or darkened residence
Identifying The Scene

Approach with caution

- Where is law enforcement?
- Broadcasting with lights and siren?
- Do you approach using the footpath or up the lawn?
- Where to stand in front of the door?
- Listen for signs of danger before announcing (or knocking).
- Identify yourself…uniform on?
In The Scene

- Be aware of your Entry & Egress
  - Code Words for egress?
    “Purple” Tie or Bag, etc.

- Avoid walking thru blood

- Do not pile all the victims clothing in one spot (at a scene)

- Changing gloves between patients
For The Most Part

- Do not touch anything unless you have too.
- Notify law enforcement what was touched.
- Document the same.
- And document….and if you remember later, document some more.
Roadway Scenes
Scene Size Up – Highway concerns

• Vehicle Positioning
• Not being seen
• Traffic can hit you
Called to the scene of a 45 year old male with a gunshot wound to the head. I87 Northbound, rest area at….

Scene Size Up – Highway dangers

- Who are these people? Wanted? Armed?
- Intoxicated or on drugs?
- Tend to be violent?
- Mental Health Issues?
Remember the #1 Threat…

The Human Threat
Vehicle Approaches

- Passenger side
- Behind the B post
- Count the occupants (+1)

Be aware for:
- Voices that are becoming louder
- Hostility
Witnesses...or the +1 Theory
The “One Pot” or “Shake & Bake” Method

Chemicals Needed:
- Pseudoephedrine tablets
- Ammonium nitrate
- Starting fluid
- Lithium strips
- Caustic soda (sodium hydroxide)
“One Pot” Method

- On the rise...
  - Eleven confirmed “One Pot” methods in 2010 of the 31 Clan labs dismantled.

- After synthesizing the drug in a vessel (i.e. two liter soda bottle) and “burping” (venting) it, the process needs to be filtered and dried to achieve the final product.
Additional Apparatus & Chemicals
Protective Actions

- Do NOT touch or move anything that is most likely associated with a clan lab.
- If the clan lab materials are in a vehicle, do not move the vehicle.
- Do NOT turn lights or appliances on or off.
- Consider all containers potential hazards.
Protective Actions

- Remove occupants as quickly as possible.
- In most cases, leave doors and windows open if practical (to ventilate the clan lab site).
- Secure the site and do not allow re-entry.
Overall

- It’s not really IF you stepped in it…It’s WHEN you step in it.
- Think Safety…who is the best safety officer?
- Remember who is going home!

Stand United and work together.

Look out for each other!
Questions, Comments or Concerns?

Doug Wildermuth
NREMT Paramedic
Regional Faculty Instructor
NYSDOH-Certified Instructor Coordinator
Volunteer Firefighter

E5 Support Services, LLC
P.O. Box 4279
Queensbury, NY 12804
Phone: 518-361-0218

Thank You!

Douglas.Wildermuth@E5SupportServices.com