

The Crime Scene Search

Before conducting any search, evaluate search & seizure issues to determine the necessity of obtaining consent to search and/or obtaining a search warrant.

What are we searching for?

Evidence

- **Something legally submitted to a competent tribunal as a means of ascertaining the truth.**

How do we recognize evidence?

Evidence is whatever is pertinent to the case.

- You can always dispose of items you collect but do not use.
- You cannot use an item you didn't collect.

The Crime Scene Walk-Through

Investigators will often conduct a walk-through for the following purposes:

1. Provides an overview of the entire scene
2. Identifies any threats to scene security
3. Ensures the protection of physical evidence
4. Only the investigator in charge should conduct a walk-through with persons responsible for the processing of the scene.
5. There should be written & photographic documentation.
6. A path should be used to minimize the potential for the destruction of evidence.

The Principles of Conducting a Crime Scene Search

Conduct a **Thorough** Search

- Lack of thoroughness is the biggest mistake made in crime scene searches.
- It is always best to search in the light of day.
- Be flexible.

Conduct an **Organized** Search

- Designate one person to be in charge.
- Allow a reasonable amount of time for the search.
- Be non-destructive in the search technique.

Examples of a Non-Destructive Search Technique

- Observe the scene before entering. Do not rush or be distracted by the most obvious part of the scene.
- Always start the search at the perimeter & work inward.
- Start at floor level & work your way up.
- When working the interior of the scene, designate a path to that area and stick to it.
- Maintain a garbage station for any trash you generate.
- No eating or smoking.

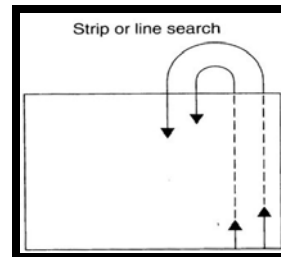
Crime Scene Search Methods

We will look at the following search methods:

- The **Line** Search
- The **Grid** Search
- The **Spiral Search** (taught but not recommended)
- The **Quadrant** Search

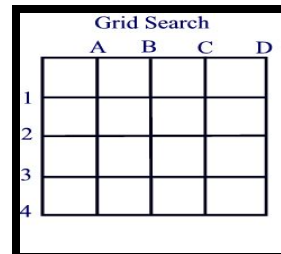
The Line or Strip Search

- The pace of the searchers should only be as fast as the slowest person.
- If one searcher stops, all searchers should stop.
- The distance between searchers will depend on the type of evidence being searched for.



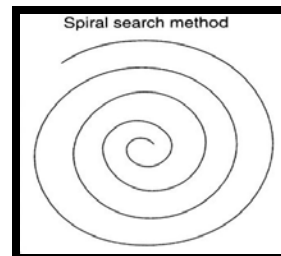
The Grid Search

- This is a good search on irregular terrain and for locating small items.
- Use numbers along on side of the grid & letters along the other side.
- Record who is responsible for each area



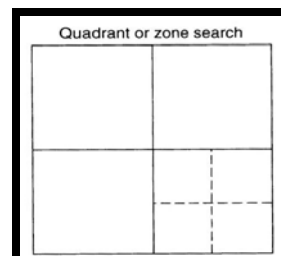
The Spiral Search

- This search is difficult to do accurately.
- It's taught as a search that begins at the center and works towards the perimeter, which is a destructive search technique.



The Quadrant Search or Zone Search

- Used for large areas.
- Typically used to locate suspects in the area of or fleeing crime scenes.
- Often done in vehicles.



Search Method Considerations

- You can use more than one search technique.
- Document in report the type of search used.
- Remember to always begin at the perimeter.

General Scene Searching Considerations

- Be cognizant of everything you see at a scene.
- A minimum of two investigators should work a crime scene.
- The lead investigator is responsible for any mistakes made; therefore he/she has the right to control actions at the scene.

Canvass

Canvass activities

- "Door-to-door" neighborhood contacts / interviews to locate potential witnesses
- Potential witnesses may be interviewed by investigators

Remember!

- Secure, Identify & Separate all Suspects, Victims & Witnesses.
- Never reintroduce a suspect to a crime scene
- Any notes or sketches generated should not be discarded.
- Remember that if there is movement within a scene, a path should be established.

Fun Fact?

- A past study done by Bob Keppel, formerly of the Washington State Attorney General's Office, advanced the statistic that murder suspects will dispose of their murder weapon within 1/2 - 1 mile of a crime scene 70 - 75% of the time.