



TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Forensic Services Division

Violent Crime Response Team Standard Operating Procedures Safety

1.6. Crime Scene Safety

1.6.1 Crime scenes are inherently dangerous; therefore, every effort shall be made to work them as safely as possible.

1.6.2 Due to the dangers and unexpected situations that may arise during an on-scene crime scene investigation, VCRT members should have their TBI issued body armor and firearms present at the crime scene if possible.

1.6.2.1 The VCRT shall work scenes that have been determined to be as free from threat as possible by either TBI Criminal Investigators or local law enforcement; however, each scene shall be assessed for perceived risk. Body armor shall be worn, based on perceived threat or lack thereof.

1.6.2.2 It shall be mandatory for the VCRT to wear body armor at any time the SA/FS has knowledge of substantially heightened risk that would be lessened rather than increased by wearing body armor.

1.6.3 A crime scene is a possible source of contamination from a variety of potentially infectious materials such as deceased bodies, liquid and dried blood, and other bodily fluids.

1.6.4 If an injury occurs at any time while working a crime scene, the injury must be reported to the VCRT Leader or to a Supervisor as soon as possible. Seek medical attention as needed.

1.6.5 Violent Crime Response Team members will wear the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) throughout the course of their examinations. This PPE includes suitable protective clothing such as gloves, crime scene uniforms, boots, shoe covers, masks, and caps. PPE contaminated with biological fluids must be discarded into an appropriate container and shall be returned to the laboratory for proper destruction.

1.6.5.1 Latex, nitrile, or rubber gloves must be worn when handling blood, bodies, and biological materials at crime scenes or at post-mortem examinations.

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- 1.6.5.2** Appropriate eye protection must be worn whenever a hazard to the eyes exists.
- 1.6.5.3** Touching unprotected body areas with hands or gloves should be avoided.
- 1.6.5.4** There shall be no smoking, eating, or drinking by personnel in the immediate vicinity of crime scenes except in designated safe areas.
- 1.6.5.5** When using aerosol chemicals, proper PPE must be used to avoid chemical exposure.
- 1.6.6** Evidence collected for transport back to the laboratory will be packaged to maintain its integrity and prevent contamination. Individual paper bags are often not suitable for containing evidence that is wet with biological fluid, since it may soak through. Double paper bags or plastic bags may be used temporarily to contain such items while they are in transit to the laboratory where they can be removed for drying. All evidence containing known biological fluids will be marked with appropriate biohazard labels. See VCRT 7.3 for additional information on evidence packaging.
- 1.6.7** Team members should be alert for sharp objects such as hypodermic needles, razors, knives, broken glass, nails, and exposed or cut metals. Limited or restricted spaces should be examined with a flashlight and/or mirrors prior to a manual search.
- 1.6.8** When using lasers at crime scenes, never look directly into the beam and use caution when projecting the beam near others.
- 1.6.9** The VCRT requires a timely response to requests for assistance, which may require a response by team members who have been awake for many hours. The lack of proper rest by a vehicle operator poses a potential danger to all occupants of the vehicle and other motorists. The VCRT Leader should use proper judgment in determining who will operate the field response vehicles and change drivers as needed. Any team member shall have the right to request that a rest period be taken, either as an operator or occupant of the vehicle. Should team members require it, lodging for the purpose of sleep prior to the team's return is encouraged. Security for the

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evidence during this time shall be the responsibility of the VCRT Leader and this will be documented in their notes.

