

Standard for Initial Response at Scenes by Law Enforcement



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 proposed standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROPOSED STANDARD?

This standard 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). This standard builds on the foundational guiding principles for scene investigation and reconstruction in OSAC 2021-N-0015.

Protocols for a complete scene investigation are not included in this standard. Additionally, it is not intended to make agency-specific protocols. Instead, it is intended to inform individual agency protocols, dictating how LEOs are to respond to, approach, and enter a scene with a focus on evidence integrity and consideration for safety, security, and medical intervention.

This OSAC Proposed Standard has been sent to AAFS Academy Standards Board (ASB) for further development and publication. Get involved as a member or by providing public comment.

WHY IS THIS PROPOSED STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Every scene has the potential to yield evidence that may be needed in a criminal or civil investigation. The use of this standard aids in preserving the scene and ensuring evidence integrity until CSI personnel can respond.

In addition, it provides procedures 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 PROPOSED STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

These generally accepted professional principles and practices are to be used by LEOs whose primary responsibility is initial response and securing the scene, and not scene investigation and evidence collection. It is not intended to replace knowledge, skills, education, training, and experience. Any deviations from this standard should be based on specific articulable circumstances. Any changes to the scene must be documented and relayed to the CSI personnel.

This standard covers the following actions of the initial responding LEO:

- Arrival at the scene
- Mitigating actions to minimize safety risks for all participants
- 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

