

## Guiding Principles for Scene Investigation and Reconstruction



### 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 proposed standard describes guiding principles for forensic personnel involved in scene investigation and reconstruction.

These guiding principles establish a framework for expected behavior and decision-making for the scene investigator and reconstructionist. Following these principles, the scene investigator strives to locate, document, collect, and preserve all items of potential evidentiary value, and the reconstructionist uses information gathered to develop or eliminate possible explanations of how an incident occurred.

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

By establishing guiding principles, the standard promotes consistency and reliability in scene investigation and reconstruction practices.

Evidence that has been collected and documented following these guidelines can assist criminal investigators, lawyers, and triers-of-fact with understanding what was collected, where it was collected from, how it was collected, and what condition it was in when it was collected.

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.

### HOW IS THIS PROPOSED STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

The standard sets forth guiding principles to be considered during an investigation or scene reconstruction. The standard urges the scene investigator to consider alternate hypotheses about what may have occurred.

The guidelines recommend that a scene investigator or reconstructionist consider the following for all decisions made before, during, and after a scene is processed:

- Legal Considerations
- Personnel Safety
- Scientific Reliability and Validity
- Preserving Context
- Maintaining Evidence Integrity
- Transparency and Ethics
- Managing Cognitive Bias



Decisions can be made to weigh each guiding principle according to the circumstances of the scene; however, any deviations must be documented and explained.