



CUSTOMTRAININGNETWORK

training consultants

Initial Action at Incidents in Schools

Initial Action at Incidents in Schools

Custom Training Network
PO Box 418 Rosanna VIC 3084
Mobile: 0409 313 414
Facsimile: 03 9011 6129

Email: info@ctntraining.com.au
Web: www.ctntraining.com.au

Custom Training Network has prepared this document to describe and provide training in investigation. It will help investigators and managers, including criminal and corporate investigators and the general public, to understand, and apply professional investigative techniques to the investigations they undertake or oversee. Individual investigators and the organisations they work for are responsible for making local decisions, including compliance with any applicable statutes or regulations.

This document deals in a summary fashion with complex matters and reflects legislation, policies and practices that are subject to change. The material in this document should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialised legal or professional advice in connection with any particular matter. The material in this document should not be construed as legal advice and the user is solely responsible for any use or application of the material in this document.

Although the material in this document has been carefully prepared, Custom Training Network does not accept any legal responsibility for the contents of the document or for any consequences, including direct or indirect liability arising from its use. Custom Training Network is not responsible for: errors due to inaccurate or incorrect data or information, mistakes in calculation, errors arising out of modification to this information, or errors arising out of incorrect use of this information.

Initial Action at Incidents in Schools

Copyright 2007 by Custom Training Network. All rights are reserved. No portion of these materials may be reproduced, transmitted, stored in a retrieval system, or translated into any language in any form by any means without the permission of Custom Training Network

Contents

Topic Outline	2
Overview	2
Objectives.....	3
Introduction	3
Aim of Initial Action	4
Locard's Principle of Exchange	8
Definitions	9
Action Upon Report of the Serious Incident	11
Before Going to the Scene	13
Actions Enroute to the Serious Incident Scene	15
Action on Arrival at the Incident Scene	16
Processing the Serious Incident Scene OR What External Investigators Will Do...	20
Conclusion	29

Topic Outline

There are numerous incidents that teachers encounter during the school year. Many of these can and should be resolved by applying the School's Code of Conduct and Discipline System with no further action. A small number of these incidents however, can be classified as serious and require the involvement of external agencies to appropriately deal with the issue. This manual is designed to develop the teacher's ability to take appropriate initial action when confronted with a serious incident. It will also give them a deeper understanding of how the actions they take initially can assist external investigators who subsequently become involved in the more serious events. This in turn will enable them to review their current policies and practices with a view to improving their effectiveness.

Overview

To achieve the objectives contained in this manual it should be combined with a professionally conducted workshop using de-identified case studies sourced from the School requesting the training.

Objectives

To provide the participant with the ability to:

- Review and make effective policy in relation to serious incidents
- Take action at the scene of a serious incident in line with basic principles of investigation
- Understand what action Police may take at the scene of a serious incident if involved
- Understand the ramifications of notifying an external agency such as the Police of a serious incident

Introduction

The initial action taken by a teacher when they first receive the report of a serious incident and then attend the scene can have an enormous effect on the success or otherwise of both their inquiry into what happened and any subsequent investigation undertaken by external investigators.

Mistakes made during initial action at a serious incident scene are seldom able to be rectified and crucial evidence may be lost or destroyed.

Before we go any further however it is important to decide what is an "incident" and what is a "serious incident"

Even though individual schools may have different definitions for the purpose of this manual the following are considered appropriate.

Incident - An occurrence or event that interrupts normal school procedure **or** precipitates an event at the school that requires intervention by teachers

Serious incident- An incident that may require the involvement of an external agency or adversely affect the wellbeing of any student **or** the reputation of the school **and** requires immediate intervention by teachers

Aim of Initial Action

When a teacher first attends an incident they find themselves having to do certain things to control the incident and then inquire into what actually happened. This is called "initial action".

The same principles of initial action can be used for any incident requiring investigation, whether it is a minor misdemeanour by a student in a school yard or a serious crime such as murder.

Let's start with the aim of initial action. The aim of initial action is to:

Discover all of the available evidence relevant to the commission of the incident or offence and the identity of the person responsible (or the cause of the incident).

To achieve this we must take action to ensure that we preserve the incident scene in its original state and prevent contamination of the scene by human or natural agency.

In the context of a school yard incident it may be difficult to see how preserving the scene is relevant. An example may clarify the issue.

e.g. You are the senior year co-ordinator when you have had a student attend your office. The student tells you that another student was playing football on the school oval when a tree branch fell from a large tree and landed on the student causing him to be injured. The tree is growing outside the school boundary. It is a windy day. The students are not allowed outside the school boundary. You attend with the student to where the incident allegedly occurred. The reporting student tells you that the student was struck 3 metres inside the school boundary. The injured student is not there (they are in the sick room). You suspect the reporting student is covering for the injured student as you know that students regularly go outside the school

boundary in this area to hide amongst the trees to smoke. Many warnings have been given to them not to due to the risk of falling branches and the breach of the schools code of conduct regarding smoking. You look for the branch that supposedly struck the student where the incident was supposed to occur. You can't see it so you ask the reporting student where it is and they say that some other students came and dragged it across the oval for fun. You check the oval and see a large branch in the middle of the oval 80 metres from where you are.

Consider how difficult the failure to preserve the scene now makes your inquiry into what happened. How much easier would it have been to believe what the reporting student was telling you if the scene of the incident had been preserved exactly how it was when the incident happened.

Consider the difference to ascertaining what happened if a yard teacher had arrived while the student was still lying injured on the ground and immediately after obtaining medical assistance called for another teacher to assist. This second teacher was then tasked to protect the scene and prevent the branch from being moved until a camera was brought to the scene. A photograph was then taken of the branch lying on the ground 3 m inside the boundary. Consider how having this photograph would impact on the report of the incident.

What if a local reporter was given incorrect information about what happened and wrote an article saying that one of your students had been injured while standing outside the boundary hiding amongst the trees smoking. The photograph would certainly assist with discrediting this story and maintaining the reputation of your students.

When dealing with a serious incident such as a sex offence, drug offence or an assault preserving the scene is even more crucial.

Unless action to preserve the scene is taken, the teacher cannot see the incident scene as it was at the time of the commission of crime or incident. By preserving the scene in its original state this will assist not only the teacher but any subsequent external investigators with the following:

- Drawing inferences about what happened in the scene
- Finding evidence linking the responsible person for what happened (if any) to the incident
- Being able to record the scene using photographs, sketches and notes for the following reasons:
 - To allow external investigators, the school principal, or even lawyers acting on behalf of the school in a civil action to refer back to if needs be

- So that a court, tribunal or even the parent of a student involved in a serious incident can view the scene and possibly draw the same conclusions as the teacher or investigator who initially attended the incident scene.

Locard's Principle of Exchange

When dealing with an incident scene it is important to understand Locard's principle of exchange. Edmund Locard (1877 – 1966) was the director of the first crime laboratory in existence in Lyon France up until 1910.

"Wherever he steps, whatever he touches, whatever he leaves, even unconsciously, will serve as a silent witness against him. Not only his fingerprints or his footprints, but his hair, the fibers from his clothes, the glass he breaks, the tool mark he leaves, the paint he scratches, the blood or semen he deposits or collects. All of these and more, bear mute witness against him. This is evidence that does not forget. It is not confused by the excitement of the moment. It is not absent because human witnesses are. It is factual evidence. Physical evidence cannot be wrong, it cannot perjure itself, it cannot be wholly absent. Only human failure to find it, study and understand it, can diminish its value."

- Professor Edmond Locard

Put simply his theory is:

Every contact leaves it's traces

Basically it means that when a person makes physical contact with either another person or environment a mutual exchange of traces (no matter how small) will occur.

Locard's principle of exchange is extremely important to police when investigating crime and can equally apply at a more basic level to teachers investigating incidents at schools.

Definitions

Incident scene – This is the **immediate area** surrounding an incident within which evidence might be found

Primary incident scene – This is the scene where the incident was **actually committed** e.g. the toilet block where a child was assaulted, or a classroom where a fight took place or even an area of a park where students smoke or took drugs

Secondary incident scene - **Other places** in addition to the primary incident scene e.g. the area that a group of youths parked and waited prior to coming onto the school grounds to assault a student.

Physical evidence – **any item**, in any state (solid, liquid or gas) that may provide proof of what occurred or create a

nexus (a connection) between the person responsible for the incident and the offence. [It can take any form.](#)

Trace evidence – very small evidence such as hair, clothes fibres, saliva, fingerprints etc. It may not be easily visible to the [naked eye](#).

Contamination of a serious incident scene – this is when evidence is destroyed or damaged by human or natural interference e.g. heavy rain washes away blood, or notes calling a student derogatory names and placed in their locker are removed and thrown in the bin by another student.

List 3 different types of serious incidents scenes you have either attended or are likely to attend:

1/.....

.....

2/.....

.....

3/.....

.....

Write down an example of when one of your serious incident scenes had been interfered with prior to you attending:

.....

.....

.....

.....

Action upon Report of a Serious Incident

When a teacher first receives a report of a serious incident it is at that point in time they should [take charge](#) of the situation and [accept responsibility](#) for dealing with the incident until it either [reaches it's conclusion](#) or someone with [higher authority](#) relieves them.

TAKE NOTES IMMEDIATELY (if possible) when receiving the initial report of an incident. Notes are extremely important as the memory can quickly forget or be coloured by interaction with other people and scenes during an investigation.

The following basic information will be required from the person reporting the incident. This should be followed by some brief instructions to the reporting person:

Nature of the incident

Exact **location**

When committed, reason for **delay** in reporting if applicable

Suspects (if not students) – known? descriptions, drugs, **weapons** or alcohol involved

Mode and direction travel

Actual time reported to teacher

Name, address, telephone numbers (if a student – class number, teacher) of caller and ascertain:

- **Location** of reporting person, telephone number of current location
- Is an **ambulance** or medical attention required
- Inform the reporting person to **remain** at scene and prevent contamination (**unless wellbeing** of caller is an issue)

- Inform reporting person to **keep** witnesses at scene and not discuss incident (**unless wellbeing** of caller / witnesses is an issue)
- Inform caller to **secure area**, not touch anything and not let people enter (unless wellbeing of caller is an issue)

A handy pneumonic to remember this by is:

NEWSMAN LARKS

Before Going to the Scene

Don't forget to take a serious incident kit (if you have one) and any safety equipment needed. Remember SAFETY FIRST, for all involved.

Consider what support may be required e.g.

- Extra manpower (other teachers)
- A camera to take photographs
- Classrooms for counselling, witnesses, offenders etc
- Other combating agencies e.g. police, ambulance, health, community and welfare services

**GRAB A MOBILE PHONE.
COMMUNICATIONS CAN BE CRUCIAL !**

Schools are often large complexes and incidents can be ongoing with multiple scenes or well away from telephones. Strive to maintain communications with the appropriate communications centre, (usually the main office) , and your immediate supervisor. Regular updates to them are just as important as you receiving any new information that may impact on the serious incident you are dealing with. Safety is often enhanced in this way also.

If sending other staff members to the incident scene ensure they:

Attend promptly..... Prompt attendance at the scene of an incident increases the prospect of **solution**.

Separate.....any person suspected of being responsible for the incident from other people, search them for safety **if necessary** and **legally allowed** and keep them under supervision (in the absence of legal authority consent must be relied on)

Preserve.....the scene i.e. preserve the scene in it's natural state, prevent contamination

Locate..... record and isolate any witnesses (in the absence of legal authority consent must be relied on)

***** NOTE: IF NO LEGISLATIVE POWERS EXIST FOR YOU TO SEARCH ARREST OR DETAIN PEOPLE THEN YOU SHOULD LET THEM KNOW THIS AND INVITE CO-OPERATION THRU A PLEASANT DEMEANOUR AND HIGHLY DEVELOPED INTERPERSONAL SKILLS. MANY POLICE HAVE BEEN FOUND CIVILLY LIABLE FOR FALSE ARREST AND ILLEGAL SEARCHING. THIS COURSE IS NOT INSTRUCTING IN SEARCH AND ARREST. AS SUCH IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU ASCERTAIN THE LIMITATIONS OF ANY LEGAL AUTHORITY YOU HAVE AS A TEACHER OR INVESTIGATOR.*****

Learn to accept that people responsible for incidents and witnesses may be agitated, upset and worried about the consequences of their actions. If you can gain their trust at the initial stages of investigation you will have a greater chance of success.

Actions Enroute to the Serious Incident Scene

Lookout for the person/s responsible coming away from the scene

Uppdate your superiors / or the office

Maintain contact with your communications centre and seek updated situation reports.

Write down who you would need to maintain contact with

.....

.....

.....

.....

Action on Arrival at a Serious Incident Scene

It is important to remember that if the incident is not considered serious enough to warrant the attention described below then the individual teacher dealing with the incident should ascertain which of the following is of use and disregard the rest.

Find out:

Who is in charge (if anyone)

Is anyone injured or in danger physically or emotionally (issue being addressed?)

Who else is present

What is known about the serious incident

Person/s responsible – have they been separated from other people, and kept under **supervision** (with legal authority only)

Witnesses – have they been located, had their details **recorded, isolated** and kept in the vicinity of the scene for the teacher responsible for the investigation to speak to (unless safety / welfare is an issue)

Is the scene adequately protected from contamination and guarded

If the scene has been contaminated, how and by who

Have the appropriate people been contacted, such as support services, welfare, relatives, supervisors etc.

Then:

- **Take Charge** of the situation

- **Make an appreciation** of the situation

- **Satisfy yourself** that a **serious incident** has actually occurred

- **Ascertain** if **medical attention** or **other assistance** is required to render the scene safe

- **Ascertain** if any **people suspected** of being responsible for the incident are still at or near the scene, if so **separate them and don't allow them to leave** (with legal authority only) Have regard for their well being.

- **Ascertain** if **witnesses** have been located then record their details, **isolate them and detain them** (with legal authority only) in an area with due consideration for their well being. Obtain updated information from them

- **Preserve** the scene, ensure it is **properly guarded** one route to and from (serious incident scene tape should be used)

- **Evolve** a **plan** of action

- **Set up** **communication links with your office.**

- **Set up** a **common meeting** point outside the incident scene (if necessary) for any other support services, manpower to meet at before being delegated tasks

- **Delegate** **specific tasks** (e.g. written log keeper of everything happening, recovery room, notification of

parents, guarding the scene, exhibit collector if required etc.

- **U** pdate communications and supervisors
- **C** onsider if more manpower required / assistance from specialized personnel

Then..... wait for the external agency to arrive and be prepared to thoroughly brief them on what has happened and what action has been taken.

HINT: Separate Suspects and Supervise them or **SSS** is an easy way to remember what to do with a person suspected of being responsible for the incident.

HINT: Record, isolate and detain or **RID** is an easy way to remember what to do with a witness

Processing a Serious Incident Scene

OR

What external investigators will do!!!!!!!

As a teacher it is likely that once the above steps have been taken an external agency will have arrived to deal with the scene. If the serious incident involved a crime and Police are called then this section will explain to you what the Police will then do to gather evidence from the scene of the serious incident.

The same or similar processes are used by any external agency that is required to gather evidence from the scene of a crime or other serious incident.

Once the above tasks are completed then it is time to process the crime / incident scene. The methodology used by the majority of investigation bodies throughout the world is very similar. It can equally be applied to very minor scenes such as the burglary and theft of inexpensive items from a school classroom and major scenes such as the Russell Street Bombing.

It is important to understand that no two incident scenes are the same and the instruction contained below should be viewed as general guidelines and principles rather than strict step by step instructions. Processing incident scenes is more like an art than a science.

Should the teacher be responsible for conducting the rest of the investigation then they should read through the following and utilise what they feel would be appropriate for their school environment.

The main objectives of the **external investigator** when processing the scene are:

- Establish a **nexus** between the serious incident scene and the offender (or cause of the incident)
- Objectively **corroborate** or **negate** the account given by witnesses and suspects
- To provide **likely scenarios** and **draw inferences**
- To **eliminate** persons and suspects
- Record the scene in its' original state to **preserve evidence** and assist the investigator to present the evidence in a manner that allows the court or tribunal to draw the same conclusions as the investigator.

To achieve these objectives the following principles must be followed:

- **Interview** – the person in charge of the scene upon your arrival and find out what is known about the scene and the incident. Request updates as more information comes to hand.
- **Locate** – exhibits / evidence without touching at this stage.
- **Record** – what is seen and found with photo's notes, sketches.
- **Preserve** – in original unspoiled condition
- **Collect** – in appropriate manner (recorded on log, bagged and labelled correctly, gloves and mask used if necessary)
- **Examine** – have a good look at what collected and examine by experts if required
- **Present** – to court in the same condition as when it was seized if possible

A competent crime / incident scene examiner should be:

- Patient
- Thorough
- Practical
- Methodical
- Able to think laterally

The basic steps to process the scene once you have secured it and found as much as possible about what occurred are as follows:

Step 1 – Preliminary survey

Step 2 – Plan your examination

Step 3 – Narrative description

Step 4 – Sketch the scene

Step 5 – Photograph the scene before moving or touching anything

Step 6 – Fingerprint the scene before moving or touching anything

Step 7 – DNA the scene before moving or touching anything

Step 8 – Search the scene

Step 9 – Record (photo's/ notes/ sketches) exhibits individually as found

Step 10 – Fingerprint exhibits individually

Step 11 – DNA exhibits individually

Step 12 – Collect and label exhibits individually

Step 13 – Final survey

Step 1 – Preliminary survey

Approach by path used to clear personnel

Keep hands in pockets and **DON'T** touch anything

Walk thru scene to gain a **solid understanding** of the scene as a whole including the existence and location of readily **observable items** that may be evidence

Pay attention to existing conditions within the scene e.g. weather, lighting, position of furniture, doors etc

Consider all information available about the incident and how it may relate to the scene. Ask yourself, "What is this scene telling me?" "Is it confirming or contradicting what I know?"

Step 2 – Plan your examination.

Consider **all** available information you have received about the offence and from your preliminary survey **then** establish a specific plan of attack

Priority is given to:

- Any evidence in danger of being destroyed

- Evidence blocking access

- Serious areas rendering the most evidence
- Evidence revealing the identity of persons involved
- Areas required to be guarded / or causing traffic obstruction

Step 3 – **Narrative description.**

This is a written description (or audio or video record) that should document the original conditions of the scene as initially found by the investigator.

The narrative description is usually **limited to view** of the scene as it is **readily observed by the naked eye.**

The aim of this narrative combined with photos and sketches is to tell a court, tribunal or “trier of fact” just how the scene appeared to the investigator when they first arrived.

It also provides a documented avenue to determine if any evidence or scene conditions have been inadvertently disturbed as a result of a later detailed search.

Step 4 – **Sketch the scene**

This can be a rough sketch or an extremely detailed scale sketch depending on the investigator. If a rough sketch is made then accurate measurements should be used to allow a later scale diagram to be drawn.

Sketches compliment photographs and can give a different perspective by being untainted by various photographic techniques such as lighting, perspective and depth of field.

Further notes will always be taken whilst sketching in order to clearly explain the detail.

An experienced investigator will often be found with **graph paper** in his crime kit to assist with sketches.

Step 5 – **Photograph the scene before moving or touching anything**

Photographs are an excellent method of “preserving evidence” and providing a clear picture to the court, tribunal or “trier of fact” of what the investigator discovered at a scene.

To be effective they should:

- Logically tell a “story” that can be pictorially viewed and understood by the “trier of fact”

- Be recorded on a written photographic log describing what they are, where and when they were taken and by whom
- Include overall, medium and close-up photographs to adequately show the immediate scene as well as the general scene location.

Step 6 – Fingerprint the scene before moving or touching anything

This will require the assistance of an expert. Upon their arrival ensure you escort them into the scene where necessary and instruct them in exactly what YOU want. Listen to their input and advice. If you disagree on what to do then contact a superior and ensure your decision is enforced.

ALWAYS REMEMBER: YOU ARE THE INVESTIGATOR AND HAVE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INVESTIGATION. SUPPORT SERVICES ARE EXACTLY THAT, SUPPORT SERVICES, THEY ARE NOT YOUR SUPERIOR.

Step 7 – DNA the scene before moving or touching anything

See step 6 advice

Step 8 – **Search the scene**

Conduct a **detailed** and thorough search of the scene for further evidence/exhibits.

Any one or a combination of the following methods can be used:

- Grid
- Strip or lane
- Zone search
- Line search

Step 9 – **Record (photos, notes sketches) exhibits individually** as they are found and fingerprint same if unable to be taken away to fingerprint expert

Step 10 – **Fingerprint exhibits individually** as they are found if unable to be taken away for a fingerprint expert

Step 11 – **DNA exhibits individually** as they are found if unable to be taken away to DNA expert

Step 12 – **Collect and label exhibits individually**

Ensure an exhibit log is compiled. This should include (but not be limited to):

- Description of exhibit
- Date and time exhibit located

- Where located
- Who located the exhibit
- Who takes custody of the exhibits after they are found (the exhibit officer)

Step 13 – **Final survey**

Ensure conditions of the crime scene have been documented as thoroughly as possible. **Then release the scene.**

Finally, any secondary scene should be treated in exactly the same way as the primary scene.

Conclusion

The information contained in this topic relates to the significant circumstances and events surrounding initial action at a serious incident and processing crime / incident scenes. It gives the teacher a guide to aid them in dealing with serious incidents in a manner that will assist any external investigators that subsequently investigate the incident.

It can also be used to enhance the way they deal with serious incidents internally.

A competent and experienced teacher or investigator recognizes that there is no perfect and unalterable set of rules which is applicable to all instances where a serious

incident is reported and subsequently investigated. However, there are certain fundamental guidelines which may be utilized as a foundation to explore the requirements necessary for success. With experience, you will know which of the guidelines to employ and when.