

# General Order

## Houston Police Department



ISSUE DATE:

June 27, 2018

NO.

600-27

REFERENCE: Supersedes all prior conflicting Circulars and Directives, and General Order 600-27, dated April 5, 2012

**SUBJECT: PRELIMINARY AND FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATIONS**

### POLICY

The Houston Police Department shall establish guidelines for officers conducting preliminary investigations and for the disposition of follow-up investigations in order to provide efficient police services.

This General Order applies to classified employees only.

### **1 PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATIONS**

It shall be the responsibility of the officer who was dispatched or who viewed an incident requiring police service to conduct the preliminary investigation. When an officer who is not assigned to a position responsible for answering calls for service views or is made aware of a crime, the officer shall contact the appropriate unit to handle the scene and contact any medical personnel if needed. If a conflict arises in determining which officer shall conduct the preliminary investigation, a patrol supervisor responsible for that area shall make the determination. The investigation shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- a. Ensure that any injured persons receive proper medical attention.
- b. Observe and make note of all conditions, events, and remarks.
- c. Establish whether a crime has been committed. When appropriate, consult with the district attorney's office of the concerned county.
- d. Secure the crime scene and protect evidence.
- e. Locate and identify witnesses.
- f. Interview the complainant(s) and witnesses. The use of a body worn camera to record statements is preferred.
- g. Determine how the crime was committed.
- h. Collect or arrange for collection of evidence.
- i. In family violence cases, assaults, or any incident involving an injury, take photographs and/or video depicting the crime scene and the victim's injuries. If a camera is not available, all injuries shall be thoroughly described in an incident report.
- j. Conduct a noncustodial interview or custodial interrogation of the suspect(s) only after consulting with the concerned division. The use of a body worn camera to document is preferred.

- k. Effect an arrest if appropriate and possible.
- l. Contact the appropriate investigative division from the scene as required by policy.
- m. Complete all appropriate reports, documenting the incident fully and accurately.

With serious crimes such as homicides, aggravated assaults, or kidnappings, the investigator from the concerned investigative division shall take charge of the investigation upon his arrival. Officers can request a Houston Forensic Science Center (HFSC) Crime Scene Unit by calling Homicide Division or the Command Center.

When HFSC is responsible for processing and collecting evidence, red inner crime scene tape shall be placed around the crime scene area as defined by the investigative division. The red crime scene tape can be obtained from Homicide or HFSC personnel on the scene.

In addition, protective gloves, particle mask, and shoe covers shall be the default requirement at any crime scene for which HFSC is responsible for processing. The level of protection could potentially be increased or decreased based on the nature of the scene and the type of evidence needing to be collected. Should investigators need to enter the crime scene area, they shall avoid contaminating the scene by utilizing crime scene Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), which can be obtained from HFSC Crime Scene Unit personnel on the scene.

## **2 FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATIONS**

When immediate follow-up investigation provides a high probability the suspect can be arrested, the investigation may be continued by the patrol officer. Officers not otherwise authorized shall contact the concerned division prior to continuing the investigation. Officers shall gain approval from the appropriate patrol supervisor prior to conducting a follow-up investigation that requires the officers to leave the district to which they are assigned. In those circumstances, the dispatcher shall be notified.

An officer from the concerned division along with the patrol division supervisor shall determine whether an extensive or time-consuming follow-up investigation is required. If the crime committed does require an extensive follow-up investigation, then the case shall be referred to the appropriate investigative division. The investigative division shall assume responsibility for all additional follow-up investigations on the case.

## **3 HARRIS COUNTY TOLL ROAD AUTHORITY ALERT PLATES ENTRY**

By agreement HPD may utilize the Harris County Toll Road Authority (HCTRA) automated license plate recognition system to identify vehicles wanted in connection with serious crimes. Qualifying crimes are listed with the HCTRA *Alert Plates Entry* form available on the department's Intranet Portal.

If an officer has a complete license plate number for a vehicle associated with or wanted in connection with a violent criminal offense or other qualifying serious crime, the officer shall contact a supervisor holding the rank of lieutenant or higher in the concerned investigative

division for approval to use the HCTRA system. After hours, the officer may contact the Homicide Division duty lieutenant for approval. The lieutenant shall review the facts of the case, complete and sign the HCTRA *Alert Plates Entry* form, and submit it to the Homicide Division duty lieutenant.

By agreement, an HPD Homicide lieutenant shall serve as liaison with HCTRA. The Homicide Division duty lieutenant shall review the form for accuracy and send it to HCTRA. If the vehicle is stopped by a law enforcement unit assigned to the toll road, an HPD police unit or investigator shall be immediately dispatched to take custody and control of the vehicle and the suspect.

When an officer becomes aware that a vehicle listed in the HCTRA automated license plate recognition system is no longer wanted, the officer shall immediately notify the Homicide Division Hold Desk. The Homicide Division duty lieutenant or designee shall immediately call the HCTRA dispatcher to have the license plate number removed from the system.

After a license plate number has been listed in the HCTRA system for seven days, the number is automatically removed from the system. If there is a need to keep the number in the system, a new request form must be submitted requesting the extension.

All requests to HCTRA for an alert plates entry or removal shall be documented in the concerned incident report.

Officers may contact Homicide Division for additional information and requirements for utilizing the HCTRA automated license plate recognition system.

#### **4 RELATED GENERAL ORDERS**

400-28, **Body Worn Cameras**

800-07, **Criteria for Submitting Incident Reports**



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