97-016 Handling of Evidence "Chain of Custody"

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

FIELD OPERATIONS DIRECTIVE

Field Operations Support Services

HANDLING OF EVIDENCE "CHAIN OF CUSTODY"

PURPOSE

The purpose of this Field Operations Directive is to set forth policy on who shall recover evidence at the scene of a crime.

PROCEDURES

It is a long established procedure and subject of training that evidence be handled only by those personnel absolutely necessary to the collection and preservation of evidence. This is generally the "handling deputy" in field investigations or the "handling detective" in cases involving more complicated crimes scenes. In either case, evidence located by "assisting" personnel shall be left undisturbed. The "handling deputy" or detective will be directed to the location of the evidence whereupon he/she shall recover the evidence.

If assisting deputy personnel find it necessary, based on exigent circumstances (i.e., evidence lying in the middle of a freeway), to recover evidence themselves, the assisting deputy or detective recovering the evidence shall complete a Supplemental Report describing the evidence and the location it was found. Additionally, assisting personnel must clearly articulate the reasons for deviating from the standard policy.

Wherein assisting deputy personnel document the seizure of evidence in a Supplemental Report or, the handling deputy documents the seizure of evidence in a Complaint Report (SH-R-49), each person involved in the "chain of custody" shall be identified in one of the associated reports. The associated report shall additionally contain the reason(s) the involved deputy(ies) had temporary custody of the evidence.

In cases involving multiple crime scenes and/or complex investigations which require several teams of investigators, the handling deputy or detective may designate specific personnel to assist with the gathering of evidence.