

Standard for Scene Response: Initial Response by Scene Investigators



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 those who respond to a scene for field investigations, commonly called crime scene investigators, with requirements for activities and actions taken when responding to the scene and steps to be completed before conducting a scene search. This standard builds on the foundational guiding principles for scene investigation and reconstruction in [OSAC 2021-N-0015](#).

It makes a distinction between the first law enforcement officer (LEO) who responds to the scene ([OSAC 2021-N-0016](#)) and the response of the investigative personnel. It does not detail all actions taken by crime scene personnel during their investigation or reconstruction of the scene.

This standard is to be used in conjunction with local regulations to inform or augment applicable forensic science service provider policies.

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?

This standard promotes consistency and reliability in scene investigation with the aim of protecting scene integrity.

A scene that has been approached and handled using this standard will provide reliable and credible scene evidence that may assist criminal investigators, lawyers, and triers-of-fact in understanding what happened at a scene.

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

The standard is used by scene investigators that respond to a scene after the initial responding LEO. It instructs the investigator to participate in a briefing with the LEO upon arrival at the scene.

Key elements in the standard include:

- Arrival at the scene: Collecting information about responding LEOs and alterations, hazards, and other information pertinent to scene examination
- Safety considerations: Taking precautions to secure the investigators' safety while minimizing changes at the scene
- Scene containment and control: Reviewing boundaries and establishing documentation, paths, staging areas, trash areas, and evidence storage area
- Legal considerations: Complying with legal standards, such as search and seizure
- Assessing the scene: Conducting preliminary scene evaluation to determine appropriate resources and response
- Documentation: Documenting all pertinent information and observations
- Scene processing: Repeating information gathering, observation, and assessment processes as necessary

