

Step One - Establish the dimensions and identify potential safety and health hazards.

- Establish dimensions. – Locate focal point. – Observe for secondary scene(s).

Investigators should locate the “focal point” of the scene, and all the areas of disturbance. Radiating out from that point, investigators establish an area that is sizeable enough to likely contain all relevant physical evidence that may be present. It is easier for investigators to condense the size of a scene at a later point than to discover that sensitive evidence outside the scene has been damaged or destroyed by other responders, media or onlookers. In addition, potential paths of entry/exit are identified.

- Identify safety hazards. – Biohazards, power, weapons, chemical hazards, traps. – Contamination. –

Witness assistance. – Communicate hazards to other investigators and responders.

Safety is of paramount importance during the initial approach to the scene. Weapons, biohazards, chemical hazards and even intentional traps could be waiting for responders. If medical, fire or coroners will be on scene, they will need to be advised regarding evidentiary issues as well.

It is imperative that the investigator obtain as much information as possible regarding the circumstances of the incident prior to entering the scene. It is important to remember that the incident scene may be an exposure point to radiation or contamination.

Statements from witnesses can broaden the scope of the investigation. The investigator develops an approach to the scene based on this information and the nature of the incident. At the scene of a crash, attention will focus on the angle of entry and debris trail.