

### Plan and communicate – Step three

Before collecting evidence, investigators must first develop a theory regarding the type of scene to be investigated. Knowing the type of scene will help investigators anticipate the evidence that could be present. This may require gathering information from witnesses or persons of interest. Based on this information, the investigation scene team will develop an evidence-collection strategy taking into consideration weather conditions, time of day and other factors. Additional investigation resources may also be requested to handle special situations.

- Determine type of investigation.
- Gather data and intelligence.
- Address legal issues.
- Determine processing priority.
- Define resources: current and future needs.
- Secure areas: consultation and processing.

### Evidence Search Methods

The scene and conditions may determine the search method to use. For example, the size of the scene and the number of people available to conduct the search may play a role in determining the best method to use.

There are five methods routinely used to recover evidence.

**Wheel** - Begin the search in the middle of the scene. Pick out a landmark and walk in a direct line searching the area immediately in front of you. When the landmark has been reached, turn and walk the same path back to the originating point. At the originating point choose another point of reference and repeat this search method until you have gone in a complete circle. This search method is effective in small areas.

**Spiral** - Start the search at a selected point at the edge of the scene. Walk in a circular pattern to the center of the scene, with the circle getting smaller as you approach the center. This search method is effective in small areas.

**Strip** - Start the search at the southeast corner of the area. Walk north in a straight line, keeping parallel with the east edge until reaching the north edge of the scene. Then, take two (2) steps west and walk south in a line parallel to the first path until reaching the south edge of the scene. This process is repeated until reaching the west edge of the scene. This method works well in a large area.

**Point to Point** - Go to the first piece of evidence, process it, then go to the next piece of evidence. Repeat this process until all evidence has been processed and collected. This method works well in small or confined areas.

**Zone** - Divide the scene to be searched into quadrants. Additional personnel may be used, or the investigator can perform the search independently. Personnel searching each quadrant may use any method they choose. This method works well in large areas. In very large search sites, the quadrant may be subdivided to effectively search the scene with all personnel available.