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11.1 Introduction

This chapter is primarily concerned with the general procedures to be followed when attending incidents, including crime scenes. Throughout we link the subject matter to police officer initial training, but the content will also be useful to those undertaking a pre-join programme at a college or university. We also examine attending and dealing with incidents involving loss of life, often sudden deaths, although not necessarily of a suspicious nature.

The police have a responsibility to respond and deal with many types of incident, but the majority of police everyday activities can be described as 'Steady State' policing. There are also 'Rising Tide' incidents, which are unexpected and cannot be planned for. Examples include large-scale rail, road, air, and sporting disasters or acts of terrorism. They may be classed as emergency, major, or critical incidents (see 11.5). 'Planned Operations' are where the police have had advanced warning of a situation (eg a large demonstration) and will have contingency plans in place (see 11.7).

The police attend volume crime scenes and minor incidents more often than major crime scenes. In a number of key respects, the principles of attending a volume crime scene are different to those employed when attending the scene of a major crime: the differences might simply be those of scale. However, as we note in 11.5, emergencies, major, and critical incidents may give rise to crime scenes of significant geographical size and complexity (such as the bombings in London in July 2005) and the events might require multi-agency emergency responses, adding to the demands of crime-scene management.

The material covered here is particularly relevant to three of the Diploma in Policing assessment units: 'Conducting priority and volume investigations' and 'Provide an initial response to policing incidents' and 'Conduct Police Searches'. In particular, the following learning outcomes and assessment criteria are relevant:

Name of Diploma unit	Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
Conduct priority and volume investigations	Understand the process for conducting priority and volume crime investigations	- Summarise the methods used to protect scenes - Summarise the methods used to protect evidence
	Be able to conduct priority and volume investigations	- Gather information, intelligence and evidence to support the investigation in line with organisational procedures and lines of enquiry - Identify the need for any additional support for investigations - Take the necessary steps to protect and preserve the scene
Provide an initial response to policing incidents	Understand legal and organisational requirements related to responding to incidents	- Explain the duty of care that Police Officers have to the public when responding to incidents - Explain why different incidents require different initial responses
	Be able to analyse information to plan responses to incidents	Gather information and intelligence regarding incidents

Name of Diploma unit	Learning outcome	Assessment criteria
	Be able to provide an initial response to incidents in line with legal and organisational requirements	- Analyse all available information to establish the nature of incidents - Prioritise actions in accordance with the nature of incidents - Take control of incidents - Preserve the scene and any potential evidence - Include others who need to be involved at the earliest opportunity
Conduct police searches	Understand legal and organisational requirements in relation to searches	Explain how to secure potential evidence from search scenes
	Be able to conduct police searches of premises, vehicles and outside spaces in line with legal and organisational requirements	Maintain the integrity of seized items, including through the use of appropriate packaging and storage

It covers parts of PIP Level 1 'Responding to Incidents' and is also relevant to parts of the Certificate in Knowledge of Policing units, 'Knowledge of conducting priority and volume investigations' and 'Knowledge of providing an initial response to policing incidents'.

11.2 General Procedures at Crime Scenes

Deployment to any incident has the potential to generate numerous challenges, for example unlawful violence against persons and premises, and public disorder. Victims and witnesses may also need support, including first aid, and in the case of more serious injuries, an ambulance or paramedics may be required. As such, an officer may need to make difficult decisions on how to respond and which actions to take first. The rationale for the decision(s) must be recorded, unless statute or organizational policy do not require it to be recorded, or the officer, using his/her professional judgement, determines that rationale is obvious.

The scene of an incident (such as a road accident) normally requires a police officer to make a judgement about the scale and type of response required so that the appropriate help and support is made available through the police and other agencies. We discuss this issue later but initially concentrate on crime. A crime scene is frequently the most important component of any criminal investigation, because it is very likely to contain physical and electronic evidence which could identify suspects, corroborates or refutes statements made by witnesses, and demonstrates guilt or innocence. Early and effective protection of the crime scene ensures that the greatest amount of potential evidence is available for recovery and, therefore, maximizes its value to the investigation.

Crime scenes are not purely geographical locations to which we can apply an address, post-code, or map reference; a victim or suspect in a crime such as a sexual assault is also a crime scene. Treating a person (especially a victim) as a crime scene may be distressing and potentially offensive to the person and to his/her family or friends, but it is vital that we consider people as sources of evidence and intelligence. This is to ensure that we effectively 'protect and preserve' them, and recover the evidence or intelligence we need. Anything that could be a source of evidence or intelligence is also part of a crime scene, including articles related to the offence, such as weapons and vehicles, computer hard drives, digital storage media, as well as the intangible such as networked environments.

Some of the biggest 'offenders' in relation to poor scene preservation are victims of crime, so any opportunity to encourage good scene management is vital, and will pay dividends. Call centre staff should be trained to explain what the victims or informants could do to help preserve evidence, and the FAO (First Attending Officer) can instruct victims and the public on simple issues such as staying clear of the crime scene and not handling evidence. Victims are often vital sources of physical evidence (especially in offences against the person and sexual assault) and preventing their contamination by others (such as supportive family members) is important. Sexual assault victims should be forensically examined before they smoke, eat, drink, wash, or go to the toilet (unless absolutely necessary) because such activity can destroy

evidence. This is sometimes very difficult to explain and may be a source of considerable conflict, yet the problem can be solved with a diplomatic and respectful approach.

Nearly all officers carry a personal mobile phone with a camera, and it might be tempting to use it to photograph a crime scene. This may occasionally assist an investigation in the early stages (eg when a wet shoe mark is evaporating). However, generally, it is better not to use the camera on a personal mobile phone at a possible crime scene because the phone would then become a source of evidence and would normally be retained for analysis of the image in its original state.

11.2.1 Early priorities at crime scenes—the FAO

The overriding principle at any incident is that all attending officers rigorously ensure the safety of the public, their colleagues, and themselves. Some of the people present at a scene of a criminal offence may be emotional, aggressive, or confused and might represent a danger. In addition, damage to premises, such as by fire, may weaken the structure of a building, resulting in further hazards.

Prior to responding to an incident, officers should ensure that they know the basic information required to ensure they are prepared and safe. This includes a meaningful address or location, an idea of the incident type and the location of any rendezvous points (RVPs). While travelling to the scene of an incident, a 'dynamic' risk assessment should be made based on the information gathered from the initial report (see the introduction to 24.4.1). The assessment should be based upon:

- what is known (objective fact/information) or believed (subjective fact/information) to have happened;
- the number of people likely to be present;
- any information on the PNC and local intelligence databases about the individuals involved (eg that a suspect has been violent in the past);
- if any weapons are present at the scene;
- any risks associated with the location and local community sensitivities.

11.2.1.1 Arriving at a crime scene

The first police officer who attends the scene (possibly as the result of an emergency call) is known variously as the FAO, the First Officer at the Scene (FOAS), or sometimes the Initial Responder; different forces use different terms. We use FAO in the remainder of this chapter. The FAO may be of any rank and position within the organization—indeed, it could be a trainee police officer—this will entirely depend on who happens to arrive first. For example, there was a special constable in Community Safety at Thetford (Norfolk) who was first on the scene of a serious assault, and he had to manage the scene and deal with first aid as well as keeping his control room informed.

The first few minutes after a **major crime** may be confusing and the FAO should control a person in the vicinity, including colleagues, and direct them to carry out urgent tasks where appropriate. Many of the members of the public near the incident may be potentially valuable witnesses and must be identified swiftly. The FAO may also have to arrest a suspect. It should be remembered that all physical evidence is expendable when balanced against human life. Hence the FAO should not preserve a crime scene to the extent that it causes delays which aggravate a victim's injuries or increase any risks to life and limb. This is not to say that physical evidence can be disregarded during the life-saving process; the FAO can advise the ambulance crew where not to tread and can carefully move furniture away from the victim to facilitate medical aid when *necessary*. However, if such actions are carried out, it is essential that moved items are left in their new position and not moved again in an attempt to recreate the original crime scene. This is because moving furniture, switching on lights, and even opening doors represents contamination (in its loosest sense, but see 11.2.5.1) and may remove items from their original context. All these actions must be reported to the crime scene investigator (CSI) early on in the investigation and should also be recorded as PNB entries (see 10.2). It is good practice in these instances for the officer to also note the decision-making process and the rationale for the action, as both may be useful when writing a statement or appearing in court. For example, imagine that an officer moves a piece of furniture to allow paramedic access to an injured person. She would need to note the original location of the furniture, time and date of the move, the reason for deciding to move it, and how she came to this decision. The decision-making process in this instance would refer to the National Decision Model (NDM).

and the Code of Ethics. Further details on forensics are covered in Chapter 26, and Chapter 24 covers investigative actions at crime scenes more generally.

As soon as the initial response and emergency treatment of any casualties has been completed all police officers, including the FAO, and other personnel attending crime scenes should withdraw. They should only re-enter if approved, and protective clothing must be worn for their own safety, and to avoid adding more misleading material to the scene.

11.2.1.2 The golden hour

The first period of any incident, particularly in major crime and critical incidents, is often described as the 'golden hour'. This is a shorthand reference to the need to identify witnesses and preserve a scene quickly so that evidence can be protected or gathered while it is still fresh and undisturbed. For example, bloodstains should be sampled or protected before they are diluted by rain, shoe impressions (shoe marks) may need to be covered in poor weather, and the body of a deceased person could be initially examined before rigor mortis sets in.

It is also advantageous to identify and interview witnesses whilst their recollections are still clear. A police officer should always listen carefully to witnesses and evaluate what they say in the light of what is already known. He/she will of course record what is said as a PNB entry, and may also make a note of further questions to ask or other lines of enquiry (see 24.4.1.2 and 24.4.3).

11.2.1.3 Cordons

Cordons are erected as a visible barrier to identify the parameters of crime scenes or other incidents, such as fires. A flimsy cordon tape is clearly not a physical barrier: it is more of a 'statement' to help limit and control access for relevant personnel. In criminal investigations, they are generally only used for more serious offences such as major crimes and fatalities.

Cordons are set up using police tape, and this should be done promptly to completely prevent public access. The golden rule is to cordon a larger area than seems immediately necessary. The tape should be securely attached to carefully chosen fixed objects, but any objects that might be a source of evidence should not be used, for instance a parked car, as the action of the wind or people moving the tape could erase evidence such as bloodstains and fingerprints. The size of the cordon should not be determined by the location of convenient fixed objects: if necessary, the tape can be affixed further out until poles are available. Whilst installing the tape the officer must also control witnesses and keep them out of the freshly cordoned area, and this is sometimes difficult. Further information about cordoning bomb scenes is provided in 11.6.2. A single cordon (or the inner or first cordon) must encompass specific areas as follows:

- the venue of any incident or suspected offence;
- all possible routes into or out of the venue;
- any location where physical evidence could possibly be found: for example, communal bins, under cars in the street, nearby gardens; and
- any location identified as significant by witnesses.

A secondary cordon (the outer cordon) can also be installed to manage the public's access and view, and is strictly a matter of control. If the public can see significant evidence then the cordon is almost certainly too small. It also makes sense to position the outer cordon so that vehicles can turn around, minimizing local congestion. Once the inner cordon is in place, nothing—not even a patrol car—may leave or enter it until sanctioned by a CSI, unless it is required to save life—for example, an ambulance or fire appliance. Vehicles moving through the cordoned area may damage vital evidence, for example at bomb scenes components of the device may be picked up by the tyres of emergency vehicles and driven out of the scene. Additionally, the offender might have leant against a vehicle outside the venue of the offence when he made off, so CSIs may need to examine every vehicle within the cordon or, on occasions, every vehicle in the street.

The powers available to the police to secure crime scenes were considered in the case of *DPP v Morrison* [2003] EWHC 683 (Admin). In a serious incident in a shopping centre involving groups of young people, the police had sought to cordon off four areas in the shopping centre to secure and preserve evidence. Morrison was arrested for obstruction of a police officer in the lawful execution of his duty (and a Public Order Act offence) after he had walked into one of the cordoned areas, despite being told not to do so by police. He was initially convicted but appealed, and the Crown Court allowed the appeal, stating that there was no lawful authority

to erect the cordon, and therefore the police were not acting in the lawful execution of their duty. The prosecution in turn appealed to the High Court. The High Court considered case law and existing legislation and decided that where a public area is to be cordoned, it was unlikely that anyone would have a right to stop police from doing so, but that on private property the police were entitled to assume that the owner would consent to cordoning. The shopping area in the *Morrison* case was privately owned but had a public right of way, so the cordoned areas were a public place (see 9.2), and the police were therefore entitled to install a cordon there. The appeal was successful. On a practical level, this decision makes it clear that in certain circumstances police officers might need to obtain search warrants (under perhaps s 8 of the PACE Act 1984) in order to remain on private premises for the purposes of a crime-scene search.

11.2.2 The rendezvous point and the Common Approach Path

The rendezvous point (RV point or RVP) is vital to the smooth running of the investigations at the scene, and should have been carefully chosen early on in the investigation. It may have to accommodate a number of vehicles, rest stations, major incident vehicles, and even a command tent. RVPs should never be placed in a narrow street with restricted access. They should always be in a roadway or on land with good access, which is unconnected to the investigation. When attending the scene of a suspicious explosion, care must be taken to search the RVP for secondary devices which have been deliberately placed to cause maximum casualties to the emergency services. In incidents involving firearms officers, forensic personnel and other emergency services will normally attend the RVP rather than the crime scene as a matter of safety.

The Common Approach Path (CAP) is a designated route from the edge of the cordon into the crime scene proper. If the scene is 'empty' (there are no living victims) there will be more time to choose the most suitable route, but in any case it should not be the route likely to have been taken by victim or offender. Nor should it necessarily be the route taken by the FAO, as he/she was acting early on without full knowledge of the facts. The selected route should minimize damage to potential evidence, particularly material which is small or almost two-dimensional—such as shoe marks and blood. Wherever possible, the CAP should be laid on solid ground, as this will help prevent evidence being accidentally concealed (eg if personnel walked on a CAP over soft soil). Ideally the CAP should be marked with tape but, in the early stages, this may not be possible. If tape is used it should not be anchored with rocks and other debris in the vicinity, since one of these may have been a weapon. Once selected the CAP should be guarded by a scene control officer.

Some of the problems associated with CAPs are:

- over-eagerness to establish a CAP through the rear of the premises: entering the premises via a back door and searching for a key may destroy vital evidence;
- how to select the route for a CAP in a flat, featureless field;
- no choice of route when a building has only one entrance; and
- no immediate available means to mark the CAP.

One of the early tasks of the CSI is to search the CAP for evidence, and if this is found the CSI may want to re-route it, or else record and remove potentially valuable material.

11.2.3 The crime scene log and attending personnel

Perhaps the most important document at the crime scene is the log, a booklet or sheet upon which the details of all attending personnel are recorded. In essence, it records any event that could have led to contamination of evidence. The log should contain details of:

- every person already at the scene when the FAO arrived;
- every person who subsequently attended the scene and the time of attendance;
- every person who entered the crime scene or inner cordon, with the time of attendance and the reason; and
- preferably, a description of the CAP so that every person attending the scene can familiarize themselves with it prior to entry.

Whilst the scene control officer should be visible it is the responsibility of all attending personnel (including trainee police officers on Supervised or Independent Patrol) to seek him/her out. Logging or resourcing databases which manage deployments and information at incidents (such as STORM and the older systems like CAD and OIS) do not record officer deployments in sufficient detail and should not be relied upon.

It is the responsibility of the scene control officer and every individual to ensure the log is completed correctly. The log must be copied and will probably be disclosed to the defence (see 24.3.3), who will study it and compare it to statements, PNBs, and other scene logs. Failure to properly maintain the log may mean that some or all of the evidence removed from the scene could be deemed as inadmissible by the CJS.

11.2.3.1 Non-police personnel at crime scenes

Ambulance crews should be allowed controlled access in order to save life. They are generally aware of how to behave in a crime scene but may have to be reminded not to touch anything needlessly and to show caution where they walk. The FAO could accompany the crew and point out apparently significant evidence to be avoided, and should take their names for later elimination (particularly of shoes, clothing, and fingerprints). Clearly, ambulance personnel should wear gloves, as should the FAO. Efforts to resuscitate by ambulance staff can generate very considerable quantities of debris, such as wrappers and used medical equipment. This material should be left at the scene for the attending CSI.

A doctor is not always required to establish that a death has occurred since ambulance crews will make a 'recognition of life extinct' (ROLE), sometimes referred to as 'Fact of Death' (FOD). In this case the attending officer should take any forms they produce and ensure these are returned to the police station. If a doctor attends, he/she should wear protective clothing, and disturb the body as little as possible. The use of oral, rectal, or deep-tissue thermometers is not generally permitted because this can interfere with biological evidence in particular, such as DNA. If there is any concern that the death may be suspicious (see 11.3) the doctor or ambulance crew should be requested to not turn the body or search through clothing to view hypostasis or injuries until a CSI is in attendance. Certification of death is carried out by a doctor afterwards, but he/she could also be asked for an opinion as to the cause of death, particularly if the deceased has apparently suffered a sudden death and is known to the doctor.

Other police colleagues (including senior officers) should not enter the inner cordon unless:

- the offender is likely to be within and must be apprehended;
- they are saving life;
- they can assist in urgent and immediate acts to prevent loss of the scene (eg putting out a small and manageable fire); and/or
- a dog is required to pick up a track from within the cordon.

In the case of deaths, there is no requirement for a senior officer to enter the scene once death has been confirmed or to confirm that a death is suspicious, because every additional person in the crime scene can potentially destroy or contaminate evidence.

The CSI will attend at the RVP (see 11.2.2) and will liaise with the FAO and other personnel, to decide how to proceed. In general terms, the CSI's initial role is to gather information, start with photography where appropriate, and advise detectives and uniformed police on the arrangements for any arrested persons. Once this has been achieved he/she will examine the CAP, record and recover vulnerable evidence from it, and occasionally move the CAP to another location. It is common for the CSI to enter the scene with the doctor to certify deaths or examine a deceased person.

The **Crime Scene Manager (CSM)** is appointed in a major crime enquiry to manage the scene and deal with scientific resources. In some cases a single CSM may be appointed, who will deal with all parts of the investigation. In a more serious or complex case there may be a number of CSMs and a **Crime Scene Coordinator (CSC)**. Typically, the CSM will be hands-on, but will also be flexible enough to attend strategy meetings and deal with other issues.

A variety of emergency personnel may attend a scene and will be recorded in the log if they enter the crime scene, unless it is a serious incident and is impractical. The following groups will also keep their own records of attendance:

- the fire and rescue service;
- Explosives Ordnance Disposal (EOD) in the case of explosions or suspected explosive devices;
- HM Coastguard and RNLI;
- mountain rescue and lowland search organizations (with dogs).

Other personnel who may attend as required include forensic scientists, borough or district surveyors and structural engineers (to assess the safety of damaged buildings), National Grid

(for gas leaks), and scaffolding contractors (to support damaged structures in order to prevent collapse). However, once cordons are in place, no one should enter the crime scene until sanctioned and briefed by a CSI unless the safety of the public or attending personnel is at risk. At a non-crime incident there will be an incident commander who should be consulted.

11.2.3.2 Powers of entry for CSIs and experts

There is often confusion over powers of entry for CSIs, scientists, and computer experts at crime scenes as prior to the Police Reform Act 2002 very little thought was given to this. However, the following now applies:

- Section 18 of the PACE Act 1984 permits entry to a premises for police officers in relation to a person who is under arrest for an indictable offence, and s 38 of the Police Reform Act 2002 modified this to permit entry for a civilian designated as an 'investigating officer';
- Section 16 of the PACE Act 1984 (concerned with the execution of warrants by police officers) authorizes civilians and specialists to attend with the police. Code B, para 2.11 refers to a 'designated person' accompanying police officers as having powers to search and seize evidence.

In many cases, however, formal permissions are not required because the occupier will invite the police to attend and enter the property.

11.2.4 Fast-track actions

In every major crime the senior investigating officer (SIO) will consider fast-track actions which might resolve the investigation rapidly. These decisions are taken after careful consideration, and are noted in the decision log or policy file (which records the decision-making process of the senior officer). However, in the very early minutes of an investigation, some actions may be necessary to prevent the loss of evidence or facilitate the apprehension of a suspect. These can include the following:

- the use of a dog to track the offender, particularly if the scent is not contaminated—the dog may have to enter the inner cordon;
- the immediate collection of evidence which is in danger of being lost, such as wadding and cartridge cases being blown down a street by the wind, photographing the image on a computer screen, powering off a smartphone (which might otherwise be remotely 'wiped');
- switching off a cooker if it might start a fire;
- covering shoe marks and tyre marks in poor weather, using boxes or bin lids taken from an area well away from the crime scene;
- an urgent search of the street (sometimes called a flash search) for evidence which has been discarded, especially when the area is busy; and
- controlling large groups of people in confined situations (eg a pub) which might cause the loss (or gain) of fibre evidence.

In these circumstances care must be taken to make the right decision. Protective clothing (at the least, clean medical-style gloves) might be needed to prevent contamination of the evidence. Police officers (including supervised trainees) should be prepared to justify their actions (or lack of them) to the senior investigating officer.

11.2.5 Forensic considerations at volume crime scenes

The attending police officer may be required to take a crime report, assess the likely *modus operandi* of the offender, record losses, identify potential witnesses, and assess the scene for the potential attendance of a CSI. Overall, fewer actions will be taken by CSIs and police officers at a volume crime scene (compared with a major crime scene). The police will also try to minimize disruption to normal life in the immediate vicinity of the crime. If the CSI is delayed, a police officer may need to:

- close doors to control children and pets (instead of using cordon tape);
- close windows and consider boarding up in inclement weather;
- if boarding-up is to be arranged, ensure the original window is left, rather than being immediately removed by the contractor;
- cover shoe marks inside premises with a chair (not a piece of paper which is more likely to be moved or trodden on);
- bring broken glass and property inside (as moisture makes fingerprinting difficult), handling it by the edges and wearing gloves;

- cover shoe and tyre marks outside with bin lids, trays, or boxes, even in sunny weather;
- on a bed use the blanket or quilt to funnel any material to a corner of the room; and
- allow the victims to make drinks and food and facilitate this, unless doing so would damage good evidence or cause a health risk.

In the presence of DNA-rich material a mask should be worn (if available) to prevent contamination from the officer. Another important consideration is to protect any articles that have to be moved by wearing gloves, and by handling material carefully: **gloves do not protect fingerprints from being destroyed**. Third, continuity must be considered, as the police officer who moves articles of interest should—technically—exhibit them. Local protocols should be followed on this issue. Details of investigative forensic procedures are covered in Chapter 26.

11.2.5.1 Preventing Contamination

Contamination is the transfer of trace evidence by any means other than direct or indirect involvement with the crime, be it accidental or deliberate. The term is also broadly used to describe damage to evidence or altering its state in some way that is not required for its preservation. Consider the contamination issues regarding vehicles, prisoners, and colleagues. For example, if a police officer is tasked to deal with a suspect and has previously been to the crime scene, then he/she could potentially contaminate the suspect with material from the scene. This may reduce the value of evidence that links the suspect with the crime scene.

Certain forms of forensic evidence are, in all practical senses, incontrovertible (eg DNA evidence, see 26.5.3). Nonetheless, such evidence will be scrutinized by the defence in a criminal case, with the intention of casting doubt on the integrity of an exhibit (see 11.2.6) and to have it disallowed by the judge. An effective defence team will look for errors in continuity, packaging, and handling, and for any possible source of contamination. The following general advice applies to reduce the risk of contamination:

- wear new surgical-type gloves and a face mask, as a minimum, when dealing with exhibits or whilst inside a crime scene. (In the absence of a face mask, at the very least, all persons present should avoid coughing or talking over exhibits.);
- store exhibits properly to prevent decay and damage. Property stores should be cool and dry. Electronic exhibits should not be stored on plastic shelving or sources of magnetic fields (motors and speakers for example);
- never deal with exhibits from two facets of the same offence, such as from the victim and the suspect;
- do not deal with clothing from one person in an offence (eg take it out of packaging) in a room that has previously been used for sampling another person;
- do not place a prisoner in a cell until it has been cleaned.

In relation to vehicles, two people from the same offence (such as victim and suspect) should never be conveyed in the same vehicle, even at separate times, until all parties have been forensically examined. Police vehicles which could contain blood in any form should be cleaned or washed down once any forensic examination has been completed, and all patrol cars should be regularly and fastidiously valeted.

11.2.6 Exhibits and exhibiting

According to common law 'it is within the power of, and is the duty of, constables to retain for use in court things which may be evidence of crime' (*R v Lushington, ex p Otto* [1894] 1 QB 420). The 'things' can include physical objects, such as a knife, and are often referred to as exhibits (as they may be exhibited to a court or 'shown to a witness [at interview] and referred to by him in his evidence' (ibid)). The ruling in *Lushington* from 1894 later formed the basis of important sections of the PACE Act 1984 (s 19 on the seizure of material, s 20 in relation to computers and digital evidence, and s 22 which describes police powers to retain seized material). Under a Code of Practice within the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996, any police officer investigating alleged crimes 'has a duty to record and retain material which may be relevant to the investigation' (see 24.3.2 on recording and retaining).

A police officer or a member of the public who finds an article which may be used as evidence should 'exhibit' it, which involves formally recording certain details about the object. If the item was originally found by a member of the public, then this process will be completed by a police officer, but the finder's initials and name will be recorded on the exhibit label and used as part of the exhibit number. The police officer will also be responsible for taking a statement

from the person about how and where it was found. The items will be packaged and labelled by the police officer who found or received the item from a member of the public. Police officers and CSIs are advised not to accept an unpackaged exhibit from anyone other than a member of the public, as this is a potential cause of contamination.

The item must be properly packaged to preserve the evidence (see 26.7 for details) and labelled. Packaging materials normally have labels printed on the outer surface which can be used for noting facts; otherwise a simple label can be affixed. For labelling, the basic information required is:

- **name** of the person exhibiting (ie the person who first found the item);
- an **exhibit number**: normally the initials of the person exhibiting the item and a sequential number (see 10.11.1 for an example);
- a **description**, which should be brief and to the point—to prevent other people shortening the description for convenience (index numbers or serial numbers should be included for clarity); and
- the **date, time, and place** the exhibit was found;

It is the mark of a professional to make detailed notes about the exhibit to assist other investigators. If detailed and accurate records are not kept about the contents of a package, another person might open it to check the contents, and this could cause contamination. Detailed notes should be made about any identifying marks, the size of clothing, any damage or stains, any logos or identifying features, serial numbers, and the precise location of the exhibit and its orientation. The procedures for storing items as they come into police possession are described in 10.9.

11.2.6.1 Signing exhibit labels

The exhibit label records the **continuity** (or chain of custody) of the exhibit. Ideally, the chain should be unbroken from its seizure until it arrives at court, so every person who takes control of the exhibit should sign the label (and later write a statement) unless local protocols dictate otherwise. The movement of bulk quantities of exhibits is often recorded on a *pro forma* by the driver, and major crime exhibits officers do not normally write a statement for every receipt of every exhibit. If, however, police officer X temporarily passes a packaged exhibit to officer Y for comment but it remains in X's custody, then Y need not sign the label. An example might be where X asks for a casual opinion, for example 'Is this a ball-peen hammer?' However, if another person Z gives a professional opinion or transports the exhibit to another place, then Z should sign the label and write a statement describing his/her actions.

11.2.6.2 Firearms as exhibits

Safety must always be considered when dealing with firearms as exhibits. That said, firearms are excellent sources of evidence. They provide ballistics evidence, and their smooth surfaces are good sources of fingerprints, and DNA can be collected from their rough control surfaces such as the grip, slide, and trigger (and from the muzzle if it has been in contact with skin or saliva). We will look at the different types of firearm and the associated law in Chapter 18.

All police forces will have strict protocols in place for entering firing ranges, accepting weapons from members of the public, and seizing them during searches. For health and safety reasons, all personnel at a crime scene should treat every weapon as if it is loaded and call for a firearms officer to make it safe. For weapons suspected of being involved in crimes it is normal practice for a photographer or CSI to be present during the making-safe process. Whilst making it safe, a firearm should not be pointed at the floor or wall if people could be below or on the other side of the wall. None of the controls should be tampered with apart from those necessary to make it safe, nor should it be 'dry-fired'.

In addition no-one should:

- handle or move a firearm unnecessarily or place another article onto a firearm;
- move a firearm by poking a pen, or any other object, into the barrel or trigger guard;
- stand in front of a firearm or point a firearm at any person, even when 'made safe'.

Every person who handles a firearm, for example when passing it to or receiving it from another person, should clearly demonstrate that it is safe. In terms of labelling, there may be force policies for firearms at scenes or in storage (often a red label means it has not been made safe, and a green label that it has). Loaded firearms should not be conveyed to the police station or laboratory unless this is necessary and suitable safety measures are in place.