

- (8) On occasions SOCO may have to work with ATO, forensic experts or other members when a joint collection of evidence may be necessary. Whichever person takes possession of potential evidence must treat it as HIS and package, label and document accordingly.
- (9) Items seized, packed and labelled at scenes may be of crucial importance to an investigation. Documentation must prove continuity of possession throughout the item's retention by the police and examining agency. Under no circumstances will items be interfered with or unnecessarily handled at scenes or be removed from packaging prior to receipt by the examining agency. This instruction will be complied with without exception.
- (10) To cater for scenes where SOCO is not present investigating officers must be familiar with current instructions re integrity of evidence, cross contamination, collection of exhibits, packaging and labelling, and those forensic guidelines which have been issued by the NIFSL police liaison unit.
- (11) For assistance, detailed at Appendix 'B' is an aide memoire of scene examination actions.

5. ORDER OF PRIORITY OF SUPPORT SERVICES

- (1) The order of entry of support services personnel and experts to the sterile area will be directed by the (S)IO after briefing and consulting with those personnel.
- (2) Where a scene necessitates the services of ATO, he has priority and the scene will be under his control until declared safe and handed over to the RUC. It is essential for the (S)IO, or in the (S)IO's absence, the SLO, to liaise with the ATO prior to the ATO commencing his examination to identify the extent of the potential incident scene to be examined, this will assist in correctly siting the ICP.
- (3) When the ATO declares a scene to be safe and hands over to the RUC, control then passes to the (S)IO who will confer with support personnel to plan the scene examination and determine the order of entry to the incident scene.
- (4) In the absence of ATO, personnel from Incident Investigation Company (IIC) or Incident Investigation Section (IIS) (previously known as WIS) will be facilitated to attend at scenes involving weapons and/or explosives but they will only enter the sterile area under the direction of the (S)IO. In general, to prepare reports for HQNI, IIC or IIS personnel should be afforded access to scenes to liaise with (S)IOs and scene investigation staff at the conclusion of the incident scene examination.

6. STATEMENTS OF EVIDENCE

- (1) Current serious crime investigation procedures require **ALL** persons entering the incident scene and named on scene log sheets to submit statements of evidence detailing their duty at the scene. Failure to do so could jeopardise the admissibility of forensic evidence which could be crucial to the Crown's case.
- (2) Personnel acting only as observers and remaining within the holding area **SHOULD NOT** be included on the scene log by the SLO and will not be required to submit statements of evidence.

7. SUPERVISION OF PRISONERS/SUSPECTS

There will be occasions when examination of clothing or swabs from prisoners/suspects for firearm (cartridge discharge) or explosive residues is required. Selected operational units have been issued with evidence protection kits to preserve residues which may be present on suspects' hands or clothing pending examination. However the benefits of the evidence protection kit can be lost if the prisoners/suspects are left unsupervised or allowed to visit the toilet and wash evidence from their hands. These persons should be 'preserved' in the same manner as a physical scene to avoid contamination or loss of evidence. They should be overtly observed as opposed to mere supervision.