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Should Police Departments Conduct Crime Scene Investigations?

The protection of evidence and protecting a crime scene are the most important aspects of a crime scene investigation. Without proper protection, the possibility of tampering with evidence is likely more probable. It takes time to successfully analyze, document, and process a scene. If a case comes to trial in the future, aspects of the crime scene investigation will be scrutinized. Police departments undergo extensive training for properly protecting crime scenes. Each officer has the training and ability to be a first responder to any crime scene. Part of the officer's duty at a crime scene is to note the condition of the scene upon arrival, or arrest any individuals that may be involved with the crime scene. The question comes into play: "Do police departments have the special training to conduct the proper analysis, properly document, and collect evidence from crime scenes?"

The question is asked due to an article, describing the decision of the [Florida Department of Law Enforcement](#) to no longer send crime scene units to Central Florida locations. The agency will be sending crime scene units to areas with fewer investigative resources. If police departments are able to conduct crime scene investigations, why are special crime scene units needed? Will this cause future problems for litigators? Trying a case that involves solely the police department, and not a special unit, may lack the expertise an attorney needs when defending a client.

Checks and balances are put in place for a reason. So are specialized jobs. With a tough economy, budget concerns are a top priority of local officials. Unfortunately, education, fire department, and police department staffs often get hit with cuts first. One could argue it is the specific training and purpose of an investigative team would lessen the likelihood of there being a problem with evidence not being categorized or handled correctly. Either way, the separation of duties and the feasibility of new and continual use of departments should be contingent on economic viability.

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