

East Haven Police Department 	Type of Directive: Policies & Procedures	No. 410.4
	Subject/Title: Preliminary Criminal Investigations	Issue Date: April 10, 2025
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	Issuing Authority: Honorable Board of Police Commissioners	Review Date: Annually
References/Attachments: Policies and Procedures #: 401, 431, 505	Rescinds: 410.3	Amends: N/A

I. PURPOSE:

- A. The purpose of this directive is to set forth the policies and procedures of the East Haven Police Department (EHPD) regarding the guidelines that officers of this department are expected to follow when conducting preliminary criminal investigations.

II. POLICY

- A. All officers of the East Haven Police Department shall carry out thorough and complete investigations as assigned.
- B. Officers who have been assigned to conduct preliminary investigations shall complete truthful and detailed investigation reports.

III. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS AND GUIDELINES

- A. The ultimate success or failure of police efforts in the identification, apprehension, and subsequent prosecution of criminal offenders is often based upon the immediate response and investigation. The preliminary investigation is a major component of the criminal investigation process. It also can often be the means of uncovering information leading to the solution of other crimes or for initiating crime prevention procedures. The preliminary investigation is generally the responsibility of officers assigned to patrol duty, as they are nearly always the first police officers on the scene of a reported crime. It is the duty of the patrol officer or officers first on the scene to discover facts, to locate and identify witnesses and to preserve physical evidence.

- B. Patrol officers and detectives – especially the leaders in both divisions – must maintain cooperative relationships and good communications. A free flow of information is necessary to facilitate continuity and thereby the quality of investigations.
- C. One of the first officers to arrive on the scene shall complete an incident report. The incident report must communicate a clear understanding of the case to people who were not present. Detectives, prosecutors and others must rely upon the report for direction. The Incident Report sets the foundation for all subsequent action on the matter.
- D. The value of physical evidence can be easily destroyed if it is not carefully handled and secured in accordance with Departmental procedures. For evidence to be admissible, the prosecutor must be able to establish the clear “chain of custody” of that evidence from the moment it comes into the possession of the police at the crime scene to the time of the presentation to the court. Every officer who handles this evidence must document how he/she came into possession of evidence; how he/she safeguarded it; and to whom and in what manner he/she relinquished it.

IV. PROCEDURES

- A. At the scene of any crime, accident, or other police incident, the on-duty supervisor present shall assume command.
- B. Assignment of Officers
 - 1. Officers should not proceed to a crime scene unless
 - a. They are specifically directed to respond.
 - b. The crime occurs or is discovered within their assigned area of patrol.
 - c. It is their particular assignment to be generally responsible for conducting such investigations.
- C. Responsibility of Backup Officers
 - 1. All officers who have responded to the crime scene as backup units should remain on the perimeter of the reported crime scene ready to assist in the apprehension of the perpetrator or to perform such other duties as directed.
 - 2. Officers proceeding to the crime scene should be vigilant and watchful in their approach for any signs of suspicious activity, especially for any evidence of a fleeing criminal or for persons acting suspiciously or furtively in the vicinity.
 - 3. Responding officers should make note of any vehicles leaving or coming from the vicinity of the crime scene and make note of the registration numbers, general description of the vehicles and its occupants.
 - 4. The officers proceeding to the crime scene should be alert for any additional radio messages concerning the call on which they are responding. Dispatch should immediately furnish the responding officers with any supplementary information that would be of assistance to them, especially any available information that would indicate

the possibility of a dangerous situation or the possible presence of an armed or dangerous suspect.

- D. Officers should only conduct a preliminary investigation for the following incidents, unless directed otherwise by a supervisor.
 - 1. Serious or complex crimes that may be referred directly to the Detective Division based on the Detective Division's Activation Matrix.
 - 2. Other incidents not outlined by the Detective Division's Activation Matrix that the on-duty supervisor and the supervisor of the Detective Division have determined will be primarily investigated by the Detective Division.
 - 3. Investigations involving the gathering of intelligence, organized crime, or vice will be referred directly to the Detective Division, unless directed otherwise by the Chief of Police.
 - 4. Serious injury or fatal motor vehicle accidents.
 - 5. Incidents in which other law enforcement agencies or social service agencies have already begun an investigation.
- E. Initial Crime Scene Responsibilities
 - 1. The first officer(s) to arrive at the scene of a crime or other police incident are responsible for the following actions as they may apply.
 - a. Make a determination whether medical assistance is needed and if so, call for assistance.
 - b. Prevent any further injury or loss of life.
 - c. Provide first aid as required within the scope of their training.
 - d. Arrest the violator(s) if sufficient probable cause exists.
 - e. Secure the crime scene for the purpose of preserving evidence.
 - f. The primary officer shall begin the preliminary investigation, which will include the following.
 - 1) Identifying, separating, and interviewing the victim(s) and/or witnesses pertinent to the investigation.
 - 2) Identifying and preserving potential evidence until it can be properly collected, packaged and marked.
 - a) Officers locating potential evidence shall notify the on-duty supervisor and/or on-scene detective of such evidence.
 - 3) Determining, as far as he/she can, the facts surrounding the case.

- 4) Attempting to learn the identity of, locate, and if possible, apprehend suspects.
 - a) In doing so, officers should conduct a background investigation of an identified suspect to assist in their investigation, which may include a SPRC and III inquiry.
- 5) Apprising the on-duty supervisor of information regarding the crime/incident.
 - a) Once the preliminary circumstances of an incident are known, the on-duty supervisor shall immediately notify the supervisor of the Detective Division of incidents that meet the criteria of the Detective Division's Activation Matrix.
- 6) Protecting the constitutional rights of those involved.
- 7) Complete the appropriate incident report(s), detailing the findings of the officer, to include facts that were collected, persons identified, and a narrative of the incident.

F. Pursuing the Perpetrator

1. The officer shall pursue a fleeing perpetrator on an arrestable offense if there is a reasonable likelihood that an apprehension can be made and there is sufficient probable cause to support the arrest. The officer should also consider the following factors in determining whether the officer should leave the scene for this purpose are as follows.
 - a. The physical condition of the victim(s).
 - b. The need to protect the victim(s) from a renewed attack.
 - c. The nature of the crime committed.
 - d. The time and place of occurrence.
 - e. The lapse of time between the crime and the arrival of the police at the scene.
 - f. Whether the suspect is known to the officer or a good description of the offender is available.
 - g. The proximity of other officers to the crime scene and/or the pursuit to apprehend the offender.

G. Unless directed otherwise by the on-duty supervisor, the patrol officer shall;

1. Keep his/her supervisor updated on the status of the investigation.
2. Complete an incident report and refer to the appropriate Division.
3. After conducting any follow-up action on a case, complete a Supplemental Report outlining the actions he/she took, the findings of the investigation, and indicate the status of the investigation.

H. Preserving and Safeguarding Evidence

1. The first officer at a crime scene plays the most crucial role in preserving and safeguarding any evidence that may be critical to a criminal investigation. Every effort shall be made to protect the crime scene for the preservation of any physical evidence.
2. To the extent possible, the crime scene shall be preserved as it was found upon the arrival of the first officer.
 - a. Physical evidence should never be moved or touched pending the arrival of evidence technicians unless it is necessary to do so to assure its preservation.
 - b. If it is necessary to move or take custody of any physical evidence, a careful notation shall be made in the incident report of its exact location and position at the scene. The physical evidence shall be photographed in its original position unless exigent circumstances exist.
 - c. If it is necessary to move any item of physical evidence, the item shall be handled in such a manner as to prevent any alteration of its condition or the accidental impression of fingerprints.
3. Spectators and bystanders shall be directed away from the scene only after it is determined that they did not witness the incident or have pertinent information.
4. Persons connected to the crime, and persons associated with the property or premises involved in the crime, shall be ordered to remain present and available for questioning.
 - a. They shall be separated and removed from the immediate crime scene as not to contaminate their observations by speaking to other involved parties.
 - b. As soon as resources allow, officers shall supervise these individuals to ensure that they comply with this directive.
5. Unauthorized persons shall not be permitted to enter or disturb the crime scene to include any police personnel not necessary for the investigation. If necessary, the premises or area comprising the crime scene may be roped or cordoned off, locked or otherwise secured.
 - a. The officer(s) guarding the crime scene shall identify and document the names and times of anyone entering the crime scene.
 - b. Officers shall look for any item of evidentiary value in plain view. This would include, but is not limited to the following.
 - 1) Weapons, shell casings, tools, clothing, shattered glass, stains, footprints, fingerprints, tool impressions, tire markings, etc.
 - 2) Ordinary objects or articles found in unexpected or unusual locations.
 - 3) Ordinary objects or articles having individual peculiarities or markings.

- 4) Uncommon objects or articles not generally found at the particular location of the crime.
 - c. Fragments that individually may seem to be of minor importance, but when taken together may be of significant value to the investigation.

I. On-Scene Supervision

1. Situations in which a supervisor is required to respond for the purpose of providing proper on-scene direction.
 - a. Those situations requiring a multiple officer response as outlined within this policy when appropriate.
- b. Motor vehicle accidents involving patrol vehicles.
- c. Incidents involving injuries to officers.
- d. Incidents involving any Town employee.
- e. In those situations where a supervisory presence is required by Department Policies and Procedures.
- f. Incidents of any serious nature, which may include emergencies such as crimes in progress, fire emergencies, etc.

J. Interviewing Witnesses

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to locate, identify and interview reliable witnesses.
2. Witnesses should be interviewed as soon as possible, and in a quiet area, if available consistent with Policies and Procedures # 401 – AVL and Officer Video Camera Use.
3. Witnesses should be interviewed separately to ensure independent statements.
4. Only personnel trained in investigating sexual assault investigations should interview victims of sexual assault. This does not preclude an officer from obtaining minimal facts in accordance with Policies and Procedures # 431 – Sexual Assault Investigations.
5. Juveniles will be interviewed in accordance with Policies and Procedures # 505 – Juvenile Offenders.
6. After all witnesses located at the scene have been interviewed, the officers shall canvas residences and businesses in the area in order to locate persons who did witness some aspect of the crime and document all findings in an incident report.
 - a. A follow-up neighborhood canvas should be done the following day at the same time of the original incident.
 - 1) A follow-up neighborhood canvas is not required of the responding officers if the investigation is referred to a different Division.

7. To conduct an effective preliminary interview of witnesses, complaints, or other parties, officers shall use the following guidelines.
 - a. Be tactful and patient.
 - b. Ask only one question at a time.
 - c. Ask questions in plain, easily understood language.
 - d. Avoid asking questions that imply a particular answer.
 - e. Ask open-ended questions.
 - f. Avoid interruptions, if possible.
 - g. For language interpretation guidance, refer to Policies and Procedures # 301 – Language Assistance Plan.

K. Victim & Witness Assistance

1. When applicable, victim and witness assistance services shall be rendered during preliminary investigations to include the following.
 - a. Giving information to the victim/witness regarding applicable services (e.g. counseling and medical attention), programs or emergency funds, and victim advocacy.
 - b. Advising the victim/witness of what to do if the suspect or the suspect's companions/family threatens or otherwise intimidates them.
 - c. Informing the victim/witness of the case number and subsequent steps in the processing of the case.
 - d. Providing a telephone number that the victim/witness may call to report additional information about the case or to receive information about the status of the case during the follow-up investigation.
 - e. Advising the victim/witness of the suspect's arrest and providing information relating to the post-arrest processing of the suspect, if applicable.
2. Appropriate assistance will be provided to victims and witnesses who have been threatened or have expressed specific, credible reasons for fearing intimidation or further victimization.
 - a. Appropriate assistance may include but will not be limited to the following.
 - 1) Criminally investigating the threat.
 - 2) Discussing a safety plan.
 - 3) Conducting welfare checks and extra patrols.

- 4) Referring additional resources to the victim or witness.
- 5) Notifying the victim or witness of any related danger that the Department becomes aware of.

3. Triennially, the Department shall conduct a review of its participation, activities, and liaison with local and state victim/witness assistance programs.

L. Reporting Requirements

1. All reports shall include at a minimum the following information, as it applies to the case being investigated.
 - a. Date and time of arrival at the scene.
 - b. Weather conditions and visibility, including the location and distance from the nearest streetlight or artificial lighting and whether the lights were on, if applicable.
 - c. Approximate time of commission of the crime and who discovered it.
 - d. Identity all police officers present.
 - e. All necessary information concerning any physical evidence discovered.
 - f. Name, address and telephone number(s) of victims and potential witnesses.
 - g. The identity or the best available description of the criminal suspect or suspects, particularly noting any unusual characteristics.
 - h. The best available description of any vehicle used by the suspect or suspects.
 - i. Any relevant measurements made at the scene and a rough crime scene sketch.
 - j. The time and location of any interviews of the victim(s) or witnesses and a brief statement as to what they heard or observed.
 - k. Any other information that the officer believes may be useful for the apprehension of the criminal suspect and his or her subsequent prosecution.
1. License plate numbers and vehicle descriptions of any vehicles in the area of the crime scene.

Preliminary Investigation Reminders

- ✓ Observe all conditions, events, and remarks regarding the complaint.
- ✓ Care for any person who requires medical or first aid attention.

- ✓ Arrest the perpetrator of the crime, if possible.
- ✓ Arrange for the immediate pursuit of the perpetrator if his or her flight is recent and initiate his or her pursuit personally if the possibility of immediate capture is likely.
- ✓ Interview the complainant(s).
- ✓ Furnish to the communications officer the best possible description of the perpetrators, giving a brief outline of the crime committed, the method and direction of the suspect's flight and whether he/she is considered armed and dangerous.
- ✓ Carefully secure the crime scene from disturbance or alteration, and carefully locate and preserve all physical evidence for collection.
- ✓ Locate and identify potential witnesses, and require that they remain at the scene until interviewed. Often it is best to keep witnesses separated if at all possible, so that they do not contaminate each other's version of what they may have observed.
- ✓ Identify all persons present at the scene and record their names, addresses, and telephone numbers.
- ✓ Record the registration numbers of any motor vehicles at the immediate scene.
- ✓ Be curious and suspicious, do not take anything for granted and do not jump to conclusions.
- ✓ Listen for and make note of any unguarded or spontaneous remarks or comments relevant to the incident made by witnesses or others present at the scene.
- ✓ Make inquiries of neighbors or bystanders as to their knowledge of any suspicious persons or vehicles in the vicinity prior to the crime.
- ✓ Note and record conditions at the crime scene, such as the time of incident, time of initial report of the incident, who made the report, the weather conditions, visibility, street lighting, description of any weapons used or injuries caused, description of any property stolen and all other pertinent information.
- ✓ Note and record as complete a description as possible of the suspect(s).
- ✓ Interview and interrogate the suspect(s) if possible.

M. Follow-Up Investigations

1. Officers shall be responsible for conducting follow-up investigations relating to their assigned cases when necessary.
 - a. Supervisors should periodically review the open cases of their assigned personnel and discuss the status of said cases with them, to ensure investigative continuity.
2. When the need arises for a follow-up investigation to be conducted, the investigating officer shall thoroughly review the case and take the necessary steps to ensure a detailed and complete investigation. These steps shall include, if applicable, the following:

- a. Reviewing case files, initial reports, evidence and all other information collected during the preliminary investigation.
- b. Reviewing any forensic or laboratory examination results.
- c. Coordinating with the State's Attorney's Office to ensure proper protocols and court procedures are being followed.
- d. Conducting additional interviews and/or interrogations.
- e. Gathering additional information and intelligence from informants and other law enforcement personnel.
- f. Planning, organizing, and executing lawful searches and collecting evidence in accordance with the Department's Policies and Procedures.
- g. Identifying and lawfully apprehending suspects.
- h. Checking a suspect's criminal history.
 - i. Determining the involvement of suspects in other crimes.
- j. Organizing all investigative findings into a clear and comprehensive case file while preparing cases for court presentation.
- k. Documenting all investigative efforts in LEAS ensuring transparency and case continuity.
- l. Maintaining communication with victims, witnesses and legal counsel as required.

3. Officers shall conduct periodic case reviews to determine if their investigation should continue or be closed due to a lack of further evidence.
 - a. An officer should consult with his/her direct supervisor when determining to close a case due the lack of further evidence.

N. Case Screening Procedures

1. The objective of case screening is to ensure the effective deployment of investigative personnel to cases that have the greatest likelihood of being successfully resolved. Screening serves as a decision-making tool for determining whether a follow up investigation is warranted, based on the presence of identifiable solvability factors.
 - a. Screening Responsibility
 - 1) A designated supervisor, investigator or other authorized personnel shall conduct the initial screening of case reports.

- 2) Screening should occur within a few days of receipt of the initial investigative report.
- b. Screening Process
 - 1) The screening officer shall review all available investigative information for completeness and clarity.
 - 2) The screening shall assess whether sufficient information exists to support an expectation of case resolution.
 - 3) A standardized checklist or review form may be used to aid in this process.
- c. Solvability Factors
 - 1) The following criteria should be considered in determining the likelihood of case resolution.
 - a) Known suspects or suspect description.
 - b) Recovery or availability of physical evidence.
 - c) Existence of surveillance footage or digital records.
 - d) Identification of cooperating witness(s).
 - e) Availability of vehicle / license plate information.
 - f) Stolen property with identifying characteristics (e.g. serial numbers).
 - g) Crime trends that match known offenders.
 - h) Suspect cooperation.
 - i) Accessible digital /electronic evidence (e.g. social media, phone/GPS data).

O. Disposition of Cases

1. Based on the results of screening, cases will be:
 - a. Assigned for follow up investigation.
 - b. Suspended if determined to lack solvability.
 - c. Held pending additional information or resources.
2. All screening efforts must be documented in the case file including:
 - a. Name of Screening officer.
 - b. Date and time of Screening.
 - c. Reason for follow up, suspension, or holding of case.