# FET Manual




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## I. Introduction

The FET Program is intended to provide technical assistance to the patrol officers on a day-to-day basis. It is felt that by having officers trained in areas relevant to evidence collection and photography, and to have those officers assigned to shifts for immediate availability, it will provide more comprehensive and thorough crime scene processing.

The Captain of the Crime Laboratory has command responsibility for the Field Evidence Technician (FET) Program. The Crime Laboratory Sergeant manages the program and serves as the FET Coordinator. The FET Coordinator is responsible for the overall administration of the program and its day-to-day operations. The area command FET Sergeants are responsible for the daily supervision and report approval of Field Evidence Technicians (FETs).

The FETs will have primary duty in patrol assignments with the collateral duty of FET. FETs are under the supervision of their patrol chain of Command. FETs should consult with the command's FET Sergeant and the FET Coordinator in matters concerning the FET programming.

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## II. Mission

The Field Evidence Technician Program is committed to supporting the San Diego Police Department by ensuring the accurate collection, preservation, and documentation of physical evidence at crime scenes. Our mission is to provide timely, reliable, and comprehensive forensic evidence that supports investigations, strengthens prosecutions, and upholds the integrity of the criminal justice system.

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## III. Vision

To uphold the highest standards in evidence identification, documentation, collection, and preservation, ensuring that forensic test results are reliable to uphold the community's faith in the San Diego Police Department and the Criminal Justice system.

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## IV. Goals

A. **Maintain Expertise**: Ensure Field Evidence Technicians maintain professional competence through ongoing training.

B. **Ensure Quality**: Provide field evidence handling that meets or exceeds national best practices standards, supported by forensic test results.

C. **Support Growth**: Foster an environment of professional growth and development for Field Evidence Technicians through continuous training, educational opportunities, and skills development.

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## V. Objectives

A. Provide thorough and timely documentation of all evidence collection and preservation activities through adherence to established protocols.

B. Regularly evaluate and improve the Field Evidence Technician program to ensure alignment with the broader goals of the San Diego Police Department's Crime Lab of being service oriented, assisting in successful prosecutions and returning the community back to a semblance of normalcy as soon as possible.

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## VI. Roles and Responsibilities

A. FET Coordinator:

The FET Coordinator duties and responsibilities include, but are not limited to the following:

1. Maintain list of FETs assigned to each command, keeping track of who is currently available and active as an FET at any given time.

2. Act as a liaison between the Crime Lab and area command FET Personnel.

3. Coordinate with Ops Support personnel on issuing FET equipment to new FETs and ensure it is collected from FETs who resign from the program.

4. Occasionally evaluate equipment and supply needs to see if the existing options still fit the needs of the program and adjust as necessary.

5. Update and maintain documentation regarding the FET program including the Ops Manual, the resource guide, and others.

6. Approve reports and assist FETs as a resource when FET sergeants in the field are unavailable.

7. Issue GSR kits, DNA swabs, and Bio swabs to FET sergeants as requested.

8. Evaluate and track the overall effectiveness of the FET Program.

9. Keep track of number of scenes each FET handles. Issue a supervisor commendation when an FET has processed three scenes within six months as per DP 5.20.

10. Reviews reports to ensure that evidence is properly recorded and described. Give feedback when needed. If FET continually submits unacceptable work even after being addressed, evaluate removal of the FET from the program.

11. Facilitates 40-hour FET Academy, FET Sergeant, FET Refresher, and other regular trainings.

12. Coordinates scheduling with Crime Scene employees and commands.

13. Manages lab provided equipment for FET lockers and conducts periodic inspections of the lockers at each command.

14. And other duties as assigned by lab management.

B. Divisional FET Sergeant

Sergeants at the individual commands designated as FET Sergeants are tasked with the traditional responsibilities and duties of a patrol sergeant. In addition, FET duties include:

1. Ensure FETs are being used at appropriate scenes for their skills and that each FET is being used in their role. There are certain considerations for deploying FETs as follows:

a. FETs should not be the case agent on events where they are processing a scene. This would necessitate two separate reports from the officer and be an unreasonable burden on one person.

b. Generally, FETs shall process scenes at their home command. They occasionally may be requested by sergeants in other commands to assist. Requests for an FET from another command will be evaluated by the patrol sergeant of the FETs home command. When making such requests, the requesting sergeant should request an FET from his/her closest command(s).

c. Certain events might necessitate multiple FETs. Consider the size of a scene and if there are multiple locations that need to be processed. If necessary, a neighboring FET can be used to assist the primary FET from the command.

2. Ensure that the FET locker remains fully stocked and organized. A list of provided supplies shall be posted on the locker door. Some supplies will be provided by the Crime Lab and others will be provided by each Division as designated on the list of supplies.

    a. If supplies are needed from the Crime Lab, contact the FET Coordinator.

    b. If supplies provided from the division are needed, contact the Command's staff sergeant or whomever is responsible for ordering supplies.

3. FETs are being trained to write reports in the same manner as Crime Scene Specialists. Due to the difference between these FET reports and other reports written by officers, FET sergeants should approve the reports whenever possible.

4. Be familiar with the FET Resource Guide. FET Sergeants should be available to answer questions from FETs during their regular working hours.

5. FET Sergeants should ensure FETs have the necessary equipment and are knowledgeable about how to use it. FET Sergeants should also ensure FETs are staying up to date with required trainings and responding to scenes on a regular basis to maintain their skills. FET Sergeants should address any issues that may arise with equipment or an individual FETs performance in matters pertaining to the FET Program.

6. FET sergeants are the connection between FETs and the FET Coordinator. They should keep track of FETs currently assigned to the division and inform the FET coordinator in the event one resigns. They should also maintain a list of officers interested in FET training for future classes.

7. Staffing assignments of FETs are under the sole purview of patrol commands. When making schedules, commands may consider distributing FETs over days and shifts to ensure adequate coverage on all three shifts, seven days a week.

C. Field Evidence Technicians (FET):

FETs report to FET sergeants on FET related matters. FETs are tasked with the traditional responsibilities and duties of a patrol officer. In addition, FET duties include:

1. FETs will arrive for their shift fully prepared and equipped to assume FET responsibilities. This includes maintaining their evidence kits in a constant state of readiness.

2. In the event an FET is requested to a scene, officers shall free themselves from minor activities of a routine nature (ex. C7 or reports) to respond to scenes within their division or at a neighboring division, when approved by their supervisor.

3. In the event an FET is requested to a scene at the division the FET works, the FET will volunteer to process the scene unless unavailable. In the event an FET is requested to a scene at a nearby division, the FET will get permission from the patrol sergeant at their command before leaving their command.

## VII. Rules and Regulations

A. When an FET is going to process a scene, they should communicate such over the radio so that dispatch is made aware. The event will then be added to the FET Log.

B. FETs should complete reports as per their training for each scene to which they respond. They should then reach out to an FET sergeant who is working to approve the report.

    1. Due to the specific nature of FET training and reports, FETs should reach out to any available FET Sergeants or the FET Coordinator for assistance before going to a patrol sergeant.

C. After a report is approved, FETs should attach the signed copy to the case in NetRMS. They should not complete an Officer's Report for FET work. A copy should also be sent to the FET Coordinator for review. An FET report template is available on the G Drive.

D. In the event an FET chooses to resign from the program, they should notify their chain of command. Once the Captain has approved the resignation, the FET sergeant at the command should notify the FET Coordinator. The FET is responsible for returning their FET gear, to include the camera and related equipment, to Ops Support at the time of resignation.

    1. If an FET is promoted to Detective or Sergeant, they are considered to have resigned from the FET program. A sergeant who was previously an FET would be a good candidate for a divisional FET sergeant.

    2. An FET must be in a patrol assignment. If the officer is moved to a non-patrol assignment, this will be considered their resignation. This does not apply to short term (ex. Two week), out of class assignments.

    3. FETs will attend or complete any required training scheduled by the FET Coordinator. This may include, but is not limited to, refresher trainings and periodic training videos.

E. The FET Coordinator reserves the right to remove an FET from the program in the following instances:

1. The FET has not responded to process a scene in a consecutive twelve-month period, absent a protected absence such as industrial leave or long-term disability.
2. The FET's work has repeatedly not conformed with the standards as trained in the SDPD 40-hour course. Prior to removal the FET will be told how he/she has not conformed to standards and/or where deficiencies are found.
3. The FET refuses to process a scene when requested as an FET.
4. Conduct in the field reflecting negatively on the FET Program, Command, or Department will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the FET's Command.

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## VIII. Operating Procedures

A. Prior to an officer performing the duties of an FET, they must complete a 40-hour in house FET course taught by crime lab personnel. The 40-hour course will include instruction and hands-on practical experience. All parts of the course must be successfully completed before an officer is designated as an FET.

1. A refresher training will be offered periodically to ensure FETs are current with forensic technology and techniques. FETs may also receive additional specialized training from outside sources.

B. Once an FET has been trained, they will respond to scenes when requested and process the scene as trained. The FET will then complete any related reports and submit them as described earlier in this manual.

C. Ongoing Training

1. Training is an essential part of an effective FET. To ensure operability, training will be of high importance and scheduled regularly. FETs will stay current with all available trainings.

2. Training will be provided by the FET Program. FETs are encouraged to bring forth any ideas or suggestions for training.

D. Crimes Scene Processing

1. A sergeant or above will determine if an FET is needed to respond to a scene.

2. FETs should respond to violent felonies and series related scenes, as well as any other scene deemed appropriate by a supervisor.

3. FETs are trained to process vehicles, crime scenes (excluding homicides, Officer Involved Shootings, and rapes), suspects (excluding those in sexual assaults), and victims (excluding those in sexual assaults).

4. When FETs respond to a scene, they should use their training to do a higher level of evidence collection than they would in their normal patrol duties.

5. For specific information on processing crime scenes, please see the Field Evidence Technician Resource Guide, available on the LAN.

6. FETs should respond to the scene and examine for physical evidence. FETs should then photograph, collect, and preserve evidence they locate.

7. After processing the scene, FETs should impound the evidence, draw the scene diagram, and generate an FET report.

E. FET Incentives

When an FET completes an approved scene, it will be counted and tracked by the FET sergeants for incentives as detailed in DP 5.20. An approved scene will meet the criteria below.

1. The FET processed a vehicle, subject or crime scene.

2. In some instances, if the crime scene is sufficiently large or there is an excessive amount of evidence, multiple FETs may be used to process one scene.

3. The FET takes photos of the scene and any evidence collected.

4. The FET correctly collects and impounds any evidence they process at the scene.

5. The FET correctly documents the scene and collected evidence in the report and any scene diagrams.

6. The FET report is approved by FET sergeants and submitted correctly.

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