



Alexandria Police Department

Directive 10.10



CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS

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10.10.01 POLICY AND PURPOSE

The purpose of this directive is to establish responsibility for crime scene control and the conduct of preliminary and follow-up investigations by this Department.

10.10.02 GENERAL

The primary purpose of a police investigation is to determine if a crime occurred, to collect facts leading to the identification, arrest, and conviction of the offender, and to organize these facts in a report to present the evidence of guilt in such a manner that successful prosecution may occur.

In every case many more facts are needed for conviction than for arrest. Every effort must be made to obtain information which will lead to a conviction. The single most important determinant of whether a case will be solved is the information supplied to the police officer by the victim or witness after the commission of the crime. The proper completion and recording of a preliminary investigation will increase the likelihood of a case being solved.

10.10.03 DEFINITIONS

Arrest – a person has been taken into custody to face the charges outlined in the report.

Exceptional Clearance – the identity of the culprit is known and sufficient evidence to obtain a warrant exists; however, due to some reason outside police control, no arrest will be made (e.g., Complainant will not prosecute; Commonwealth's Attorney will not prosecute; Perpetrator is dead; Subject has been arrested by another jurisdiction and no charges will be placed by this Department.)

Open – investigation continues.

Pending – all leads have been exhausted. No further investigation is possible or practical until new leads develop.

Terminated – all necessary action has been taken. The case is at an end as far as this Department is concerned.

Unfounded – the offense did not really occur in the first place, although at the time of the original report it was reported to have occurred, or the investigation reveals no laws were broken.

10.10.04 RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. **Supervisors** will ensure that employees conduct adequate and complete preliminary investigations and thoroughly document them in offense and supplemental reports. They will ensure that each report contains the necessary elements of the reported offense and a supportable recommendation as to whether the case should be listed as pending, closed, open, or terminated. If follow-up investigation is necessary, the supervisor will determine whether the investigation should remain with the unit originating the report or be assigned to another unit, and note this recommendation in the appropriate block in the Offense Report. Supervisors will, by signing the reports in the proper spaces, assume the responsibility for the acceptability of the report and the disposition at that time. [82.2.4]
- B. **Patrol supervisors** will consider the guidelines in 10.10.09, C, when determining whether follow-up should be made by uniformed personnel or members of specialized units. [42.1.4]

1. Patrol supervisors may request the assistance of specialized investigators if an offense under investigation by officers under their supervision is serious enough to warrant it. Conversely, supervisors may recommend that certain cases, which would normally be forwarded to a specialized unit, be handled by the original reporting officer instead (e.g., minor felonies with leads that should be followed up as a continuing part of the preliminary investigation, or within one or two days thereafter). Patrol supervisors are responsible for coordinating assignment of such investigations with supervisors from specialized units to avoid duplication of effort.
 2. Patrol supervisors will determine whether continuing investigations by patrol officers will be held in abeyance until the next tour of duty of the investigating officer, continued by the investigating officer past the end of the shift, or assigned to an officer on the on-coming shift for investigation. In the latter case, the assignment will be coordinated with a supervisor from the on-coming shift.
- C. **Supervisors** will ensure that follow-up investigations are assigned to the appropriate officers, that investigations are conducted within the time frames allowed, and that supplemental reports are submitted on schedule. In most cases, follow-up investigations should be assigned to the original investigating officer, but supervisors may assign follow-up investigations to other officers, as necessary (e.g., follow-up investigations will not normally be assigned to officers on Patrol *midnight shift*, *Midnight shift* supervisors will coordinate follow-up investigations with supervisors from other shifts, as necessary). Patrol follow-up reports should be submitted within seven (7) working days unless an extension or longer initial investigation period is granted by a supervisor. [42.1.4]
- D. **Commanders of specialized units** may set timetables for submission of supplemental reports and completion of investigations, as appropriate. Supervisors of specialized units may assign cases for follow-up investigation based on recognized practices within the units.
- E. The first supervisor to arrive on a crime scene will be in control of the scene (as explained in 10.10.07) until relieved by a supervisor from a specialized unit or higher authority. [12.1.2, d]
- F. **The Report Review Officer** (assigned to Information Services Section) will:
1. maintain a tracking system for: [42.1.4]
 - a. reports initially completed by the Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU) but needing Patrol follow-up;
 - b. case jackets assigned to Patrol for completion; and
 - c. Patrol case jackets sent to the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.
 1. review all offense reports to ensure proper offense classification.
 2. send reports needing completion and/or correction back to the approving supervisor, with a due date by which corrections should be completed.

- G. **Officers taking offense reports** will notify the complainant or reporting party of the status and note this on the report. Officers will notify the reporting party of any change in the status if notification of a change is warranted.
- H. **Crime Scene Investigators** will conduct a thorough search of the crime scene, to discover, describe (as to location, position, and condition), collect, transport, and preserve all physical evidence relating to the crime found at the crime scene. **[42.2.1, c; 83.2.1]**
- I. **Supervisors and officers** will be held accountable for the practical application of the guidelines set forth in the accompanying Preliminary Investigation Manual (Appendix A).
- J. **Communications personnel** will offer telephone reporting as an option to persons who call in to report those crimes that may be taken by telephone, and will refer calls to the Telephone Reporting Unit (TRU) when TRU is staffed. Information Services Section (ISS) supervisors will notify Communications when TRU is not staffed or when there is a backlog of reports in order to avoid unnecessary referrals.

10.10.05 CRIME SCENE CONTROL**[83.2.1]**

- A. It is the policy of this Department to stringently limit the access to crime scenes to those persons immediately and directly connected with the investigation of the incident, with the obvious exception of Fire and Rescue personnel, who will be allowed limited access to care for injured persons or to suppress fires, as necessary.
1. Personnel without a valid investigative purpose will be denied access to the scene.
 2. Commanders at the rank of Captain or above may enter the area to confer with and/or provide guidance to the scene commander. They may request a review of the scene for legitimate purposes, ensuring that their presence does not compromise the crime scene.
- A. The crime scene is the physical area in which a crime occurred and/or the area in which evidence may be found. The extent of the area will be determined by the course of the investigation in each incident. It will include the area immediately surrounding the location of the crime, as well as any secondary perimeter established away from that location which is needed to control the scene itself.
- B. The first patrol supervisor on the crime scene will be in command unless relieved by higher authority or relieved at the termination of a tour of duty.
1. The scene commander will be accountable for the following:
 - a. overall administrative command and coordination of all personnel assigned to duties related to activity within and surrounding the scene;
 - b. providing all reasonable requests for resources for use within the perimeter of the crime scene;
 - c. establishing a command post, as needed; and

- d. ensuring a record is kept of the presence and assignment of personnel and equipment at the scene and providing for relief of personnel and deployment of new personnel assigned to the scene.
- A. Until directed by the *crime scene investigator*, officers will not touch, move or disturb any physical object at a crime scene except to prevent its destruction or for safety reasons. **[42.2.1, c]**
- B. Scenes involving establishments open to the public will be closed if access to any portion of the establishment interferes with the security of the scene.
- C. In all scenes in which the investigating officer is assigned to Criminal Investigations or Vice/Narcotics, appropriate investigative supervisors and commanders will have access to the scene. That supervisor or commander will determine if additional investigative resources are needed and provide whatever assistance is needed to the investigating officer.
- D. News media representatives will not be allowed access to or be allowed to film crime scenes without permission from the scene commander. The Public Information Officer should coordinate all such requests, in accordance with Police Directive 10.21, Media Relations.

10.10.06 PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION**[42.2.2]**

- A. The Preliminary Investigation Manual (Appendix A) is an integral part of this directive.
- B. The preliminary investigation begins when the first police unit arrives at the scene, and continues until a postponement of the investigation or transfer of the responsibility will not jeopardize the successful completion of the investigation. **[42.1.4]**
- C. A preliminary investigation consists of, but is not limited to, the following activities:
 - 1. proceeding to the scene promptly and directly (while responding, be observant for suspects, witnesses, suspect vehicles, etc.);
 - 2. rendering assistance to the injured;
 - 3. arresting the perpetrator (keeping multiple suspects separated when possible);
 - 4. locating, identifying and keeping witnesses (separated) at the scene until interviewed;
 - 5. interviewing the victim(s), complainant(s), witness(es), and suspect(s) *individually and* separately; **[42.2.1 d]**
 - 6. maintaining crime scene integrity, protecting evidence and arranging for collection of evidence by the evidence technician (in some cases certain

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evidence should be secured immediately by the officer, such as drugs and/or weapons taken from a suspect);

7. identifying the offense committed;
 8. noting conditions, events, and remarks;
 9. reporting the incident fully and accurately;
 10. conducting a search for a missing person as directed by a supervisor; and
 11. yielding the investigative responsibility to the Criminal Investigations Section when instructed to do so by a supervisor.
- A. Responsibility for Conducting the Preliminary Investigation
1. Except in those cases where the presence of a uniformed officer would prevent or hamper a proper investigation, the preliminary investigation will be conducted by the Patrol officer assigned to the call for police service (or by TRU when appropriate). [42.1.4]
 - a. The **assigned Patrol officer** will initiate and complete as many activities listed in 10.10.08, C, (above) as possible.
 - b. As soon as the preliminary investigation is concluded, and before the patrol officer returns to service, the officer will complete an original Offense/Incident Report (APD-7), unless otherwise instructed by a supervisor or dispatcher. The officer will list on the prescribed report form all pertinent information obtained at the scene of the offense, all action taken, and all other personnel who were notified or who arrived at the scene and took any action involving the investigation.
 1. Immediate notification of crime to other units:
 - a. The assigned patrol officer will initiate action, through a supervisor, to inform other appropriate departmental units of a serious crime or one requiring immediate on-the-scene follow-up investigation.
 1. Bad check cases and other white collar offenses:
 - a. Patrol officers (or TRU when appropriate) will take the initial report on all embezzlements, forgeries, credit card frauds and similar white-collar offenses, unless officially relieved of this responsibility by a detective or their supervisor.
 - i. **Identity Theft** – Virginia Code §18.2-186.3:1 indicates “a consumer may report a case of identity theft to the law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction where he resides.” Officers will take an Identity Theft report (APD-7) if the victim resides in the City of Alexandria, regardless of where the offense may have occurred. [42.2.8, a]
 - ii. All reports will be completed on standard computerized police reports. No specialized report forms are required. [42.2.8, b]
 - iii. Identity theft is defined under Virginia Code §18.2-186.3. The Criminal Investigations Section will follow-up Identity Theft cases and coordinate investigations with other agencies as necessary. [42.2.8, d]

iv. Officers will provide the victim with the following information, instructing them to contact one of the credit bureaus. The company the victim calls is required to contact the remaining two companies. Also see Appendix B for additional information to be provided to victims.

[42.2.8, c & e]

- **Equifax:** 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com; P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
 - **Experian:** 1-888-EXPERIAN (1-888-397-3742); www.experian.com; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, TX 75013
 - **TransUnion:** 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com; Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790
- a. Persons wishing to report offenses involving checks written for insufficient funds or on closed accounts will be advised to call the Criminal Investigations Section between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m. weekdays to schedule a time to make the preliminary report.
1. Preliminary and follow-up reports on cases involving narcotics and vice operations will normally be handled by Vice/Narcotics personnel.
 2. Complaints against Department personnel will be referred to a supervisor, who will evaluate the complaint and decide whether to refer the case to Internal Investigations.

A. Pending Cases

[41.2.5; 42.1.2; 42.1.4]

1. Patrol officers making initial reports of crimes will indicate in the report if the case should be classified as pending. The officer will notify the reporting party of the status of the case. The reviewing supervisor will endorse or deny the recommendation.
2. These recommendations will be based upon the following:
 - a. availability of witnesses;
 - b. naming of a suspect;
 - c. information about suspect's location;
 - d. information about suspect's description;
 - e. information about suspect's identification;
 - f. information about suspect vehicle;
 - g. whether the victim and/or witnesses can identify the suspect;
 - h. information about traceable property;
 - i. information about a significant Method of Operation (M.O.);
 - j. information about significant physical evidence;
 - k. presence of an evidence technician who indicates that good physical evidence is present; and
 - l. whether the victim and/or witness is willing to assist with prosecution.

10.10.07 FOLLOW-UP INVESTIGATION

- A. The follow-up investigation is an extension of the preliminary investigation. The purpose of the follow-up is to provide additional investigation in order to *affect* the arrest of an offender and/or recover stolen property, and to secure evidence that will lead to the conviction of the offender.
- B. Basic activities of the follow-up investigation include, at a minimum: **[42.2.3, a - i]**
1. reviewing and analyzing all previous reports prepared in the preliminary phase, departmental records, and results from laboratory examinations;
 2. conducting additional interviews with victims and witnesses and interrogations of suspects;
 3. seeking additional information (from uniformed officers, informants, etc.);
 4. planning, organizing, conducting searches, and collecting, evaluating, and arranging for the analysis of physical evidence; **[42.2.1, c]**
 5. identifying and apprehending suspects;
 6. determining involvement of suspects in other crimes;
 7. conducting background investigations on suspects, to include criminal history checks; **[42.2.1, d]**
 8. recording information obtained, in preparation for court presentation (to include initiating a case jacket and ensuring that all forms in the case jacket have been completed);
 9. making a "second contact" with principals involved in a case requiring follow-up investigations or which has been closed;
 10. recovering stolen property;
 11. evaluating to identify potential "loopholes" in the evidence, and searching for additional evidence or witnesses to close them; and
 12. conducting surveillance activities to identify suspects, develop information about suspect activities, and link suspects to a crime or series of crimes and/or to persons known to deal in stolen property. **[42.2.1, e]**
- C. Responsibility for conducting follow-up investigations **[41.2.5; 42.1.4]**
1. The following cases will be assigned for follow-up by the Criminal Investigations Section: Homicides; rapes and other felony sex offenses; commercial robberies; juvenile sex offenses (including enticement and suspicious persons with juveniles as reporting parties); white collar crimes; Domestic Violence incidents; child welfare cases (e.g., CHINS; child abuse; cases where Child Protective Services

personnel were notified); felony investigations involving *significant travel outside the City*; missing persons; and other serious cases requiring intensive, specialized, or confidential investigations.

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- a. Cases involving narcotics and vice operations will normally be handled by Vice/Narcotics.
 - b. Felony hit and run cases and hit and run cases that will take the investigating officer more than one mile outside the City will be handled by Patrol. ~~normally be assigned to the Traffic Unit.~~
 - c. Other cases will be assigned to the appropriate unit for follow-up, depending upon the circumstances of the individual case.
2. A supplemental report must be prepared by each officer who works on the case, but not necessarily for each occasion it is worked on. The unit commanders will maintain a file to ascertain that supplemental reports are submitted as required.
 3. Upon the arrival of the assigned specialized investigator, the patrol officer will relinquish responsibility for the investigation unless otherwise instructed by the scene commander. The assigned patrol officer will be required to obtain adequate information to properly complete an original report, and will be responsible for the completion of the original APD-7.
 4. On major offenses, supervisors will ensure that each officer who responds submits a supplement detailing what that officer saw and heard as it pertains to the offense.
- D. Follow-up investigations of *Patrol* cases where a felony warrant has been issued and the suspect is in another jurisdiction not within the Commonwealth of Virginia will be assigned to the *Special Response Unit*. The assigned *officer* will complete the following process.
1. Notify the Commonwealth's Attorney (during normal business hours) of the charge and jurisdiction in which the suspect is believed to be located and obtain extradition authorization using a Notice of Extradition (APD-51), which should then be attached to the original warrant.
 2. Notify the affected jurisdiction by Teletype, explaining the charges, and identifying the Commonwealth's Attorney who has authorized extradition.
 3. If the out-of-state jurisdiction holding a suspect requests a certified copy of our warrant, the detective handling the case will ensure that a Warrant Certification (APD-70) is completed, attached to the certified copy of the warrant and sent to the arresting jurisdiction. The original warrant will be filed in Information Services until executed.
- E. Follow-up investigation of cases assigned to CIS where a felony warrant has been issued and the suspect is in another jurisdiction, not within the Commonwealth of Virginia, will remain with the assigned detective, who will complete 10.10.9.D, 1-3 above.

By Authority Of:

**David P. Baker
Chief of Police**

PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION MANUAL

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I. INTRODUCTION

The Preliminary Investigation Manual is a guide for conducting initial criminal investigations. It lists the options available to an investigating officer to attain the most effective balance of time spent versus results gained in an investigation. The suggestions included do not deal with every type of initial investigation. They will ensure an increased chance of reaching the objectives of: 1) crime identification; 2) crime solution with apprehension; and 3) the successful prosecution of the criminal. Investigations are most effective when the investigating officer views the work as a **process** rather than as a series of simple tasks. This process becomes the overall strategy to provide guidance for the officer. This manual describes that process and provides guidance in selecting appropriate investigative procedures.

Rarely are two crimes exactly alike, so there cannot be one set of procedures which officers should follow in each case. Through creativity and flexibility the officer can be responsive to the many factors arising during an investigation. The preliminary investigation is the vital first link in a total investigative effort by a department. The quality of **the initial effort** will determine the Department's overall success in crime solution.

II. OBJECTIVES OF A PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION

The preliminary investigation is the Department's first response to a report that a crime has occurred. The primary objective of the preliminary investigation is to determine if a crime was committed, who committed the crime and to make an apprehension. The investigating officer is responsible to collect the documentation which will solidly

support: 1) the fact a crime took place; 2) the identification of the person(s) responsible for the crime; and 3) their arrest and subsequent conviction.

The Offense Report is the vehicle for documenting the results of the preliminary investigation. Often, investigating officers see their role as no more than a report taker. Officers **must** remember that they are the preliminary investigators and that their work will uncover the majority of usable information about the case.

Framework

The framework of the preliminary investigation is based on the following major tasks:

- verification that an offense actually occurred;
- identification of the victim(s) and witness(es);
- identification of the place and time of the crime;
- identification of the actual or potential suspect(s);
- communication of the circumstances of the crime; and
- identification of those investigative tasks completed and of those yet to be done.

Completion of these actions is the objective of the preliminary investigation and should guide the efforts of the investigating officer. There is no definitive order of priority by which these tasks must be done. The best investigative strategy dictates that the officer should first determine whether a crime has occurred.

III. VERIFICATION OF OCCURRENCE

To verify the occurrence of a crime, the investigating officer must do four things:

- respond to the scene;
- identify and assist the victim(s);
- document that a crime has actually occurred; and
- determine when and where the crime occurred.

A. Responding to the Call

The preliminary investigation begins when an officer receives a call to respond to the scene of a crime. Officers should mentally prepare themselves for arrival at the scene. They should be ready to begin asking questions and consider the factors appropriate to the type of crime committed.

The first priority of the investigating officer is to determine if anyone is injured.

B. Documenting the Occurrence of a Crime

The occurrence of a crime is usually relatively simple to determine. The investigating officer must eventually record the precise violations of law based on the limitations of the criminal code. It is best, however, to first determine what events have occurred, to

put out a look-out if appropriate, and then, after other facets of the investigation are completed, define the exact crime.

Here are three crime determination guidelines to follow:

- Thought should be given to whether the lapse in time between the offense and the notification of the police seems normal or questionable.

- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]

C. Identifying the Victim(s) and Rendering Assistance

Another important initial task of the investigating officer is victim identification. Often, victims have the most useful information about an incident and about who is responsible for it. The victim usually is the complainant and will usually be the first person the officer interviews.

When victims are excited, the officer must first try to calm them enough to allow them to accurately tell their story. Officers should properly identify themselves, and then ask detailed questions to obtain a general description of what happened. This permits the victim to calm down and provides the officer with an understanding of the overall sequence of events. Officers should be supportive toward the victim by remaining calm, sympathetic and understanding.

The officer must remain neutral and not offer moral or social judgments. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

IV. IDENTIFICATION OF SOLVABILITY FACTORS

A **solvability factor** is information about a crime which can provide the basis for determining who committed the crime. Not all crimes can be solved, no matter how much investigative effort is put forth. There are so many crimes committed each day that many departments find it difficult to provide even a minimal investigative effort for all reported crimes. Therefore, the number of crimes solved diminishes because fewer crimes receive sufficient investigative resources to produce a successful result.

Without a positive solvability factor the chances of a crime solution are small. When a positive solvability factor is present, there is a reasonable chance for a solution.

Solvability factors have been identified through extensive research into what information results in crime clearances. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

V. IDENTIFICATION OF WITNESSES

[42.2.2, b]

A. Objective

Witnesses are usually the most important source of information about a crime. The investigating officer should thoroughly search the area surrounding the crime to identify people who may have seen or heard something directly or indirectly related to the crime.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

C. Procedures

The first witness discovered may have all the facts. It is still important to find a second or third witness as they will be very important for corroborating evidence when a case eventually goes to court. It is important to find all possible witnesses in any investigation.

Crimes are emotional events and emotions often color perceptions and memories of a crime. **It is advisable never to rely solely on one source of information.**

[REDACTED]

D. Indicated Actions

To assist follow-up investigators, the investigating officer should record all persons as witnesses. Included should be the witnesses': names, addresses and telephone numbers, and what they saw, heard, or know about the crime.

[REDACTED]

E. Measures of Success

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

F. Crime Scene Search

A search for witnesses is not a complete crime scene search.

[REDACTED]

Felony crime scenes should be processed by a crime scene investigator (CSI). The investigator should collect the evidence in any locations which may be an integral part of the crime scene.

[REDACTED]

In many major crimes, the evidence documentation will be done by the crime scene investigator. When a crime scene does not warrant a CSI or when a CSI is not available, the officer should take appropriate action to collect and preserve evidence for analysis and/or court presentation.

[REDACTED]



VI. IDENTIFICATION OF PROPERTY

Stolen property can also be a witness, a silent witness, to the commission of a crime and the suspect's identity. The collection and proper recording of complete property descriptions is a critical aspect of the preliminary investigation.



VII. IDENTIFICATION OF SUSPECTS

A. Objective

The object of identifying suspects is to determine who the criminals are and to locate them.

B. Strategies



[REDACTED]

C. Procedures

[REDACTED]

Obtaining a Detailed Description:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

D. Indicated Actions

[REDACTED]

E. Measures of Success

[REDACTED]

VIII. IDENTIFICATION OF SUSPECT VEHICLES

A. Objectives

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

B. Strategy

[REDACTED]

C. Procedure

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

D. Measures of Success

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

IX. IDENTIFICATION OF A MODUS OPERANDI

A. Objectives

Modus Operandi (M.O.) is important as it can establish a pattern of activities between a series of criminal acts.

[REDACTED]

B. Strategies

[REDACTED]

C. Procedure

[REDACTED]

D. Indicated Actions

[REDACTED]

E. Measures of Success

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

X. SIGNIFICANT REASON TO BELIEVE THE CRIME MAY BE SOLVED WITH REASONABLE ADDITIONAL INVESTIGATION

A. Objectives

[REDACTED]

B. Strategies

[REDACTED]

[Redacted]

C. Procedure

[Redacted]

D. Indicated Action

[Redacted]

E. Measures of Success



XI. COMMUNICATION AND DECISION-MAKING

If a case is not closed immediately by arrest, the work of the investigating officer concludes when a decision is made to refer the case to another unit or to halt the investigation. It is at this stage that officers must ensure that their work is complete and properly documented. Any further efforts by this Department will depend upon this evaluation and upon the quality of the preliminary investigation.

As we have seen, the primary task in the preliminary investigation is to:

- identify solvability factors;
- determine whether there is a chance the crime could be solved;
- ensure that the information obtained is of sufficient quality so as to be useful in future court action; and
- ensure that these tasks are properly documented and recorded.

At the end of the preliminary investigation process, the investigating officer should decide whether sufficient information has been developed to make solution of the crime possible.



The success of every investigation is totally dependent upon the quality of the work done in the preliminary investigation.

Federal Trade Commission Recommendations

If you are a victim of identity theft, take the following **four steps** as soon as possible, and [keep a record](#) with the details of your conversations and copies of all correspondence.

- 1. Place a fraud alert on your credit reports, and review your credit reports.**
- 2. Close the accounts that you know, or believe, have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.**

Call and speak with someone in the security or fraud department of each company. Follow up in writing, and include copies (NOT originals) of supporting documents. It's important to notify credit card companies and banks in writing. Send your letters by certified mail, return receipt requested, so you can document what the company received and when. Keep a file of your correspondence and enclosures

- 3. File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission.**

Victims can file a complaint with the FTC using the [online complaint form](#); or call the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline, toll-free: 1-877-ID-THEFT (438-4338); TTY: 1-866-653-4261; or write Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20580. Victims should also call the Hotline to update their complaint if they have any additional information or problems.

- 4. File a report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.**

Provide the complainant with the case number. If they have printed out a FTC ID Theft Complaint form, sign their form and write the police case number in the "Law Enforcement Report" section.