

**Crime Scene Investigator Questions and Answers Session  
With Chief's Advisory Council**

1. Does one have to be a sworn (commissioned) officer to be a Crime Scene Investigator?  
**Depends upon the Department. The State of Nevada has gone the route of civilianizing the position. Currently at the North Las Vegas Police Department you do not need to be a sworn (commissioned) officer.**
  
2. What kind of training, education, etc. does one need in order to become a Crime Scene Investigator?  
**An Associates Degree at a minimum in a science field or in criminal justice or one year of experience as a Crime Scene Analyst/Crime Scene Investigator with another agency. Knowledge in and of photography is very beneficial.**
  
3. Does the City of North Las Vegas Police Department have any psychic detectives/crime scene investigators? Are psychics ever used?  
**There are no psychic Crime Scene Investigators or psychic Detectives within the North Las Vegas Police Department. Nor to any knowledge have any ever been used.**
  
4. How many Crime Scene Investigators/Crime Scene Analysts does the CNLV currently have on staff?  
**The North Las Vegas Police Department currently has eight employees dedicated to the purpose of crime scene investigations. There are six Crime Scene Analysts (CSAs) and two Crime Scene Investigators (CSIs). When the two CSIs leave the CSI Bureau they will be replaced by civilian CSAs.**
  
5. What is the first step that is performed when a CSI/CSA arrives on scene? Are there certain patterns on how a crime scene is processed?  
**The first step is to speak with the first responder (first person on the scene) to find out all necessary information. This way all necessary equipment is on hand at the scene. It depends upon the type of scene to determine how the scene is processed but almost always the next step is to take photographs, so the scene is documented before anything is touched. Most always the scene will be processed from the outside in. As CSIs/CSAs go through the scene taking various photographs, they are also looking for evidence. These items of evidence will also be photographed and either processed at the scene or collected to be processed back at the crime lab. Most crime scenes are processed step by step in a type of routine so that things are not missed and the most evidence is collected.**  
  
**As for certain patterns on how a crime scene is processed, most are normal and routine, however if the Detectives will be coming out to the scene, then the CSI personnel would have to wait until their arrival before beginning work.**
  
6. How frequent does a CSI/CSA go to court?

**It depends. It can be as often as once or twice a day or once a week. One never knows.**

7. Is a checklist used for processing crime scenes?  
**As a trainer these are used regularly to train new employees. After training is complete it is up to the employee's discretion to use a checklist or not.**
8. Do you have a special garment that is worn during crime scene processing?  
**Gowns, booties, goggles, etc. are provided for our use. Contaminated gowns, gloves, booties, etc. are disposed of in the Department's Biohazard room.**
9. At the end of shift, do you delouse?  
**Sometimes yes. We also decontaminate from O.C. spray contamination. Oleo Capsicum (O.C.) is used to control specific scenes and causes the eyes to tear, the nose to run and mucus to form.**
10. Can a citizen do a "ride along" or a "sit along" with any of the CSI/CSA personnel?  
**Yes. In order to be eligible to do this, one must fill out an application and undergo and pass a background check. Ride alongs and Sit alongs are done only when there is available staff. One must be eighteen years or older in order to participate.**
11. Why do certain crime scenes get processed while others do not?  
**All crime scenes are processed in some fashion. It all depends upon the location of the crime scene and what type of crime has occurred. The condition of the materials to be processed also plays a part. Not all surfaces provide a smooth enough surface for fingerprints to attach and not all persons leave fingerprints behind. Sometimes processing may consist of just photographs being taken. Dust causes a lot of problems for collecting fingerprints. Car burglaries are also difficult. We will fingerprint process the outside of the car, however the District Attorney's office may not prosecute anyone whose fingerprints are found because they could say they touched it just walking by.**
12. What are some of the reasons that one would choose crime scene investigation as a career?  
**If you are good at puzzles or like to find clues, crime scene investigation might be the career for you. One of our current employees chose it as a profession because they liked the way the investigation also incorporated science into the process. They find it very satisfying when they can process an item of evidence for fingerprints, find those prints, be able to remove them from the item, and then be able to use technology to match those fingerprints to a person with a name. They state that there is no better feeling than that.**
13. What constitutes the hardest type of crime to investigate from a crime scene investigations standpoint?  
**It's different for each person. CSIs/CSAs are human and as such have emotions and feelings about what they have to do and see, but their jobs require them to**

**follow the facts. Emotions and feelings have to be put on the back burner. In speaking with one CSA they stated that some of the hardest scenes that they have had to handle are those involving children who can't speak for themselves and tell what has happened to them. This leaves the CSI personnel left to analyze the evidence and try to find out what happened through those items. Suicides are tough too, because a determination has to be made as to whether it was in fact a suicide or a murder that has been staged to appear as if it was a suicide. Another difficult scene to handle are those where the investigator knows the victim.**

14. What types of evidence are processed in house and what types of evidence must be sent to outside facilities/labs for processing?  
**Evidence items such as gun shot residue kits are sent to a specific lab for processing and evidence items such as ammunition, firearms, DNA and footwear are sent to the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department. The North Las Vegas Police Department can process pretty much anything else, such as fingerprints and the collection of DNA swabs, etc.**
15. What/who determines which crimes a CSI/CSA responds to?  
**Most of the time this is the determination of the first responder or first officer on the scene, but sometimes it is the Patrol Sergeant, Patrol Lieutenant, or Detective that decides this.**
16. Does the Crime Scene Investigations Bureau ever participate in joint investigations with other agencies?  
**Yes, the CSI Bureau sometimes works with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department or the Mesquite Police Department. CSIs/CSAs have worked some scenes alongside Las Vegas personnel as well as also doing some fingerprint work for Mesquite P.D. The Bureau has utilized the services of the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department for any aerial photography that might be needed and has worked with various fire departments.**
17. Once items are collected from a crime scene approximately how long does it take for the items to be processed?  
**It depends on the items of evidence and how busy we are at that time. If it is a firearm to be fingerprinted, not a problem. That can be done right away. If the items are from a sexual assault then it could take a while. Evidence tells a story. It is important that the story be told in the right way with all the facts.**
18. Who cleans up the crime scene of items such as blood?  
**There are private companies that can be hired to clean up crime scenes that occur on private property. The City is responsible for cleaning up public areas.**
19. Do the CSI/CSA personnel regularly get tested for diseases since they work in and around blood?  
**Per collective bargaining agreements the commissioned personnel do get tested yearly at city expense. Civilian staff must pay for this testing on their own.**

20. Please explain how fingerprint classifications work?  
**Everyone's fingerprints consist of only three options of patterns; arches, whorls, or loops. A person can have any combination of these patterns. It's possible to have all whorls or arches or to have a combination on one hand. No one has the same fingerprints. They are all different, not even twins have the same patterns to their fingerprints. Fingerprints are fully formed by 12 weeks/3 months of gestation. In classifications, each finger is assigned a numeric value. The pattern on the finger begins the process to classify a person's hand in the classification system. This system files the fingerprint cards numerically for easy retrieval.**
21. Please explain what is meant by "chain of evidence"?  
**Chain of evidence, which is also referred to as chain of custody, is a written documentation of who has handled the item of evidence, from the time it was collected and packaged, to who examined it and who stored it, to when it was released or destroyed.**
22. What happens to evidence?  
**There are various ways to dispose of it, including being released to the owner or destroyed. Evidence release is based on various factors such as the statute of limitations, court orders, case is closed, etc. If it is drugs then it will usually be destroyed. Murder cases can be "closed" (solved), however the evidence is never destroyed or released because of the possibility of appeals. Also, with the advances of DNA, more "very old" (25-30 years old) cases are being re-opened and evidence tested for DNA to possibly clear a wrongfully convicted person.**
23. What types of tools does a basic evidence collection kit contain?  
**A camera, flashlight, fingerprint brush powder, lift tape, and lift cards. A more advanced kit may contain some tweezers, a black light, different powders, and/or chemicals for fingerprints. These advanced kits also carry impression casting tools for foot/shoe prints and tool marks.**
24. What types of vehicles are used by the CSI Division?  
**Vans, major crime scene van, and SUVs.**