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**Hazardous Materials Evidence Collection
Crime Scene Procedures Protect Response Force, Preserve Evidence
--By CDP Public Affairs**

Evidence collection processes have sometimes determined the outcome of criminal proceedings. However, the crime scenes of today are making the process more difficult with the potential recovery of chemicals, explosives, biological or radiological materials. These aspects make it even more paramount to follow procedures to ensure safety of on-scene personnel and successful prosecution of criminals.

Detectives may not always be the first on scene to survey and collect evidence. This requirement could fall into the hands of anyone responding to the crime, and understanding preservation procedures could avoid disputes in court.

A unique training course called WMD Hazardous Materials Evidence Collection, at the Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP), introduces responders to the proper procedures, and how to protect themselves by using a nationally accepted evidence collection process.

“Crime scenes that present CBRNE hazards demand the use of specialized response skills that merge law enforcement and other disciplines to handle hazardous materials,” said Mike Aguilar, CDP training specialist. “The HEC course bridges this discipline gap. Graduates of the HEC course are better prepared to protect themselves from the CBRNE hazards and specifically trained to follow correct procedures required in the event of criminal prosecution.”

Clad in thick gloves, protective suits, masks and boots, firefighters, emergency medical services, hazardous materials, and yes, law enforcement, photograph, sketch the scene, and communicate real-time reports to the incident commander.

Set in a mock community, using realistic crime scenes consisting of prop explosives and potential chemical or biological threats, responders of all disciplines come together in this 16-hour course.

“In the past only police were concerned with evidence,” said James Chapman, HEC course manager. “Now the responders are learning that it is everyone’s concern, and that a standardized collection process will simplify the procedure.”

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Hazardous Materials Evidence Collection (Cont.)

“The collection process we demonstrate is accepted as a universal approach to evidence collection and has withstood defense actions,” said Chuck Kissack, resident training manager. “If an evidence collection process can be directly tied to the national protocols—and demonstrated in court—debate on correct process or procedures lose credibility.”

The CDP is located in Anniston, Ala., and funds courses for state, local, and tribal response personnel, including travel, meals, and lodging. Learn more about other training opportunities at <http://cdp.dhs.gov> or call 866-213-9553.

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FEMA's mission is to support its citizens and first responders to ensure that as a nation we work together to build, sustain, and improve our capability to prepare for, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate all hazards.