



**Colorado Springs Police Department
General Order 840**

Section 8: Identifications -- Investigations and Evidence

Active Date: 3/10/2014
Supersedes Date: 4/16/1989

Approved
Peter Carey
General Order

.01 Purpose

To specify guidelines and procedures that apply to all forms of suspect identification.

.02 Cross Reference

[GO 844, Live Identifications](#)

.03 Discussion

This General Order sets ground rules for conducting any form of identification. Specific procedures for types of identifications are given in the General Orders cited above.

.04 Policy

All officers of the Department have a responsibility to identify persons responsible for criminal acts. A major part of the process involves interviewing victims and witnesses for the purpose of having them recognize and identify suspects. As such identifications are essential to prosecution, and because errors in making identifications can result in serious violations of individual rights, officers must be careful to conduct all parts of the identification process in a manner that ensures due process of the law, eliminates suggestiveness, and documents the process for use in court. The procedures described in this General Order are mandatory, in all investigations, to avoid compromising either the rights of any person, or the court admissibility of evidence.

.05 Definitions

This section intentionally left blank.

.10 Integrity of Identification

Officers conducting identification processes will do so in a manner that ensures that individual witnesses are not influenced by any other witnesses or incidents, or by any behavior of police personnel. The following guidelines should be employed, whenever applicable, in any type of identification procedure:

- Whenever possible, witnesses should view the suspects out of the presence of other witnesses.
- Witnesses who have taken part in identification procedures must not be permitted to discuss their observations or conclusions within the hearing of other witnesses before, during, or after the identification procedure.
- When presenting a suspect to an eyewitness for identification, officers will remain as neutral as possible, consistent with the continued secure custody of the suspect. Officers must not by word or gesture, before, during, or after the identification procedure, suggest that a suspect committed the crime being investigated. Officers should not say or do anything to lead the witness to believe that a suspect has been formally arrested or detained, that a suspect has confessed, or that the suspect has had incriminating evidence in his/her possession .

.14 Recording Circumstances

Officers shall record the following circumstances when conducting any identification:

- Time and location
- Persons present
- How conducted
- Duration
- Statements of witnesses attempting the identification
- Other circumstances that may assist in determining the validity of the identification

.20 Composite Images

A composite image is an image based on the memory of, and description from, a witness. Although its purpose is to bring about recognition of an unidentified person, feature, or property, the end result will always be an approximation rather than an exact likeness. It is to serve as a general pictorial documentation of a witness' memory. When a suspect has not been identified but a witness is able to provide a very good physical description of the offender and feels that they could assist in a graphic rendering of that person, the creation of a composite image may be considered. Composites are intended to be used to generate other investigative leads by helping officers or citizens recognize or recall possible suspects, rule out suspects, corroborate statements, and elicit new information.

In general a composite sketch should be initiated within a week or two of the incident, however this consideration is not to say that a sketch should not be attempted after a significant period of time has passed. Although recall retention has been shown to decline over time, instances of extreme stress have been shown to extend retention of even small details. Each case should be evaluated on an individual basis before the decision is made to produce a composite sketch. In order to obtain assistance with the production of a composite image the employee should consult the Special Victims Section Lieutenant.

Composites should be prepared by law enforcement personnel who have received appropriate training in their application. As a rule, because these cases may lead to courtroom testimony in which credibility will be an issue, only personnel who are employed by or have been thoroughly screened by a bona-fide law enforcement agency should be employed in this capacity. It is critical that proper interview techniques be employed to insure that the graphic rendering is from the witness's memory, and has not been unduly influenced by suggestiveness on the part of the person preparing the image, or impacted by artistic license.

Investigators who are considering the use of composite sketches in their investigations should avoid showing photographs to witnesses or using any other facial identification procedure until the composite sketches have been completed. These precautions should be taken to eliminate the risk or suggestion of contamination to a primary memory that could affect recall.

When used, composite images may be displayed by themselves, and need not be included in a panel or array of other images. Any release of composite images to the news media must be coordinated with the CSPD Public Information Officer.