



SASKATOON _____
POLICE SERVICE

TO: Shirley Greyeyes, Chairperson
Board of Police Commissioners

FROM: Cameron McBride
Office of the Chief

DATE: 2024 September 04

SUBJECT: Video Production – Anatomy of a Homicide

FILE #: 2,013

ISSUE:

To raise awareness and create understanding in regard to Saskatoon Police Services (SPS) response to critical incidents including homicides.

RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

STRATEGIC PRIORITY:

This report supports the strategic theme of Crime and Safety and Communications by ensuring accessibility and enhancing communications with the public in regard to police response to critical incidents.

DISCUSSION:

Homicides and other critical incidents are complex investigations that demand immediate response. The more quickly accurate information is gathered, the more likely it is that officers locate a suspect and solve the case. Critical incidents greatly affect police resources as they must provide an appropriate response, ensuring public safety while investigating criminal activity. The most effective response to a homicide requires investigators to front-end load their efforts with an all-hands-on-deck approach to ensure proper procedure is followed and that no evidence is missed.

Most often, when police respond to calls of this nature, they must attend to largely chaotic scenes, despite having received only a few initial details. They enter a situation where they do

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not know if a threat to public safety remains – if the incident is ongoing, or if the suspects have left the scene. For responding officers, the safety of any victims and the public is the priority before officers’ own safety. They must work quickly to secure the scene, protecting victims and bystanders as well as evidence that may be pertinent to investigations. If there are not enough officers available required for this initial response, the ability to preserve evidence required to solve the case dwindles. Since much of this work must happen immediately and simultaneously, a large number of officers are required. Some of the initial duties to be carried out during a homicides service including but not limited to the following:

Patrol Members

- Life-Saving Measures
 - According to SPS policy, the first duty at the scene of a suspected death is the preservation of life. If there is any reason to believe the victim may still be alive, medical aid is sought immediately. This includes carrying out life-saving measures until an ambulance arrives.
- Secure area, reduce any potentially dangerous situations
 - Initial response varies greatly as the scene may or may not still contain suspects, victims, weapons and/or active violence.
 - Establish perimeter
 - Log in all personnel with arrival and departure times
- Guard Scene and Suspects and Victim (AROs may support with this depending on the situation).
 - Police take custody of each and must maintain custody to ensure continuity
 - Coordinate with coroner
- Identify victims/suspects/witnesses
 - Remove, secure and isolate any suspects or witnesses
 - Canine tracking for suspects as required
 - Transport witnesses and/or suspects to SPS HQ for interviewing by Major Crimes
 - Major Crimes Officers interview witnesses and have patrol officers follow-up on any leads (dropping evidence, exit paths, etc)
- Threat Assessment and Containment
- Walk/patrol surrounding area looking for cameras or evidence
 - In this specific case, weapons were found in the areas,

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- Canvass and re-canvass the area and other relevant areas (where victim/suspect frequented)
 - Cameras caught suspects fleeing and hundreds of people were canvassed to see if they witnessed anything.
- Next-of-Kin Notifications are usually performed by a Sergeant on Patrol

Forensic Identification Member:

- Examination of fingerprints
- Photography/video
- Sketches
- Collection of exhibits and evidence requiring identification or laboratory examination

Major Crimes:

- Establish command post and Incident Commander
- Coordinate with FIS and patrol members, keeping them informed on the investigation
- Extensively document scene
- Write warrants as required
- Interview witnesses and/or suspects as soon as possible including additional members to monitor interviews
- Assist in canvas for video
- Review videos already obtained
- Work with Coroner
- Consult Crown
- Coordinate Media Releases with Public Relations and Strategic Communications Team

On May 19, 2022, at 4:34 p.m. police responded to a call for service categorized as a disturbance. This is a summary of SPS response.

Before the homicide occurred, SPS officers had already been dispatched to 138 calls for service that day, ranging from searching for a potentially suicidal person reported to have headed for one of the city’s bridges, to a domestic violence situation involving a knife just east of the University, a cab driver being bear maced in Riversdale, and public intoxication calls along 8th Street. When the calls came in for a disturbance and an unknown problem, the first arriving officer found a victim suffering from numerous gunshot wounds, informed the SPS Communications team of the gravity of the situation, asked for more backup and immediately began performing life-saving measures without knowing if he was vulnerable to an ongoing attack. As more officers arrived, two stayed with the victim attempting to save his life until Medavie arrived, while other officers began securing the scene and evacuating the building, identifying suites that may contain the crime scene. The Tactical Support Unit (TSU) are specially trained in the dangers of entering a contained space such as a suite without knowing what may be occurring on the other side of the

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door, and they quickly arrange a plan for entry, unsure if more victims or suspects could be waiting for them. Multiple officers are required for this as initial information is still coming in and they have to be prepared for anything. In this case, upon entry, officers found no remaining victims or suspects on the premises. They ensured the suite was empty, identified it as the crime scene and turned the scene over to the Forensic Identification Section until they finish their documentation. By the time the scene is released almost 30 hours after the first calls for service were received, 62 entrances and exits of the crime scene were documented.

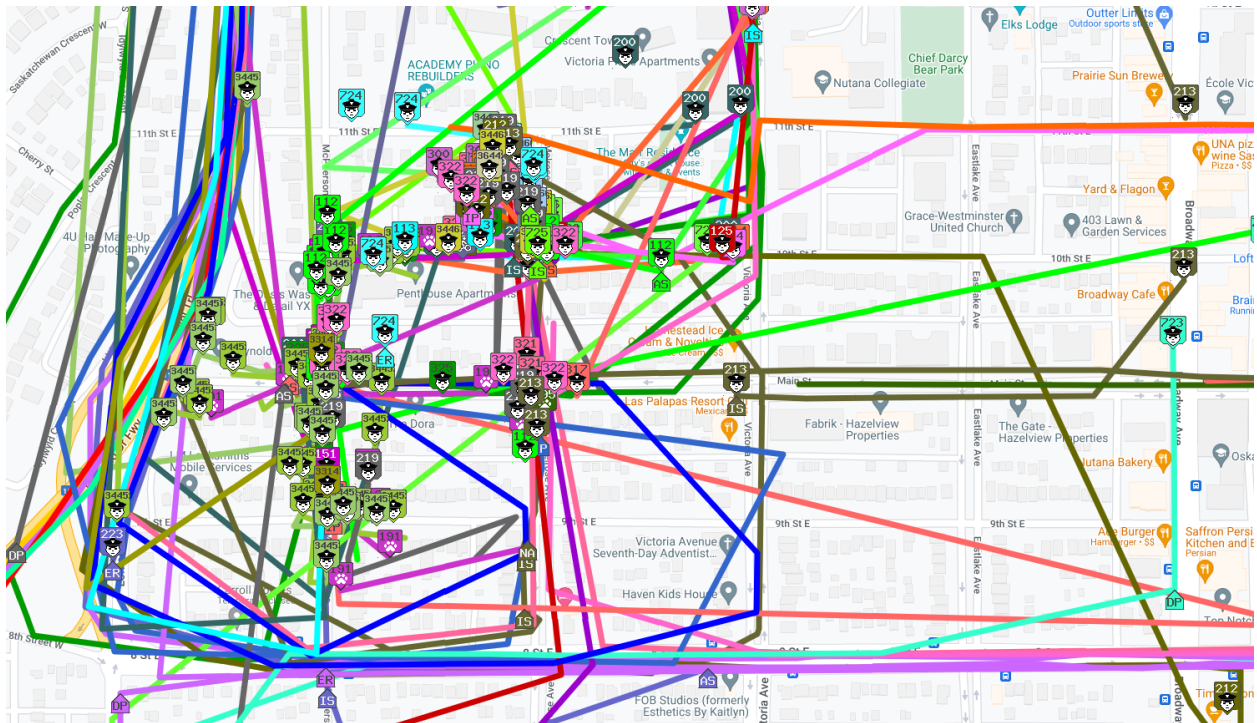
Concurrently, SPS members had identified a number of potential witnesses who may have information regarding the incident and began transporting them to the station to be interviewed. Bystanders may think they have not seen any crucial evidence, but a thorough interview can corroborate information or bring out new evidence so everyone must be interviewed. As there are many interviews that need to take place, witnesses must sometimes wait at the station until the Major Crime team is available to carry out and monitor the interview. The transporting patrol member accompanies the transported witness during their time in the station, and may help transport them home if required and if resources allow it.

Despite having found the crime scene and a number of people involved in the incident, the weapons used were nowhere to be found, so SPS members begin to canvas the area looking for witnesses, potential sources of surveillance video or evidence. The Canine team assists in doing an article search looking for discarded items that have recently been in the possession of potential suspects. Information received during the investigation lead officers to find the first crime gun in a nearby dumpster, within the taped off crime scene. This day, about 100 dwellings in the surrounding neighbourhood were visited by officers attempting to speak with potential witnesses and gathering information on what may have happened. They also identified a few security cameras that recorded the suspects as they fled the scene. This work must all happen simultaneously and as soon as possible, in order to ensure anyone with information or cameras are properly identified or interviewed and that crucial evidence is not missed. The following day, officers continued to scan the neighbourhood for evidence and a slow but meticulous grid search resulted in finding the two more handguns.

While one crime scene was busy with the initial steps of the homicide investigation, two additional victims were found in separate locations. One showed up in a cab and was taken to hospital, while another collapsed on a nearby lawn. Officers were dispatched to guard them to protect them and any evidence such as their clothing and to continue the investigation. Police knew there were three people with gunshot wounds but had yet to determine what role each played in the incident and what had occurred. In this case, one of the people with a gunshot wound became a suspect and eventually plead guilty to manslaughter in the summer of 2024.

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Below is an image showing the GPS movements for dispatched officers during the first 4 hours of police response.



Needless to say, all of this effort requires considerable communication and coordination from Major Crimes, Communications and many other supporting roles. Special Constables from Communications dispatched 54 officers a total of 72 times, keeping track of their movements, updating the call remarks and ensuring their safety. Coordinating numerous simultaneous duties during a dynamic and unfolding critical event is essential to proper response as well as officer and public safety. This incident occurred at 4:34pm, shortly before shift change, so many officers who were already at the station were able to clock in early and help out, while many initial responding officers stayed on overtime to complete their duties instead of clocking out at the end of their shift.

Major Crime Detectives are generally not included in the dispatch information included above. They are the case managers and take on the role of incident commander going to the crime scenes but also working long hours at police headquarters conducting and monitoring interviews, considering the information coming in and tasking patrol members as required. They review all incoming information from witness interviews to surveillance video, suspects intelligence being gathered. They ensure legal authorities are followed; writing warrants, coordinating with Crown, Coroner and the Public Relations and Strategic Communications team and vetting and organizing disclosure. Major Crime Detectives are the subject matter experts and sift through all incoming information to best direct limited resources. In this case, interviewed 13 witnesses, sent 64 items with DNA to the national forensic lab for testing, documented 139 exhibits and sent information to the crown in three sets of disclosure with the help of central records.

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| Section | OT and Callout Hours | Section % |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Other | 50.5 | 19.48% |
| Major Crime | 112.01 | 32.47% |
| Patrol | 94.33 | 48.05% |
| Grand Total | 256.84 | 100.00% |

CONCLUSION:

In the current policing environment this is considered an adequate response to a critical event. As a result, it means that additional officers are called to work, and overtime is also required. For this case, in less than three days, between May 19 and May 22 over 120 hours of overtime and more than 136 hours of call-out time were required. Just under half, 48% of those hours were carried out by Patrol officers, while another third (32%) were from Major Crime.

Written by: Alyson Edwards, Director, Public Relations and Strategic Communications
Reviewed by: Darren Pringle, Deputy Chief of Operations
Approved by: Cameron McBride, Chief of Police