

MSPMLC Learning Center

STEM Challenge #3: Crime Scene Response

A winter day of enjoyment turned into a traumatic and horrifying experience for a group of bird watchers, when they stumbled upon a shocking discovery! Halfway through their hike, the group caught a glimpse of something beneath the favorite perch of an owl. As they moved closer, they saw what was unmistakably a body. Overcome with fear and revulsion, the bird enthusiasts made a hasty retreat.

Upon being notified of the grisly discovery the local police secure the scene and called in State Police investigators, who are responsible for investigating all homicides in Massachusetts outside of the largest cities. A State Police Detective assigned to the District Attorney's Office responded to the scene. They also called in a team of State Police Crime Scene Services Section Troopers and civilian chemists to assist. The Medical Examiner's Office was also notified.

From the state park's fire access road, investigators follow a trail of broken branches, brush, and tire tracks to the scene in a secluded area. As soon as the team arrives, the case officer walks them around the area. Members of the team videotape and photograph the surrounding area and all visible evidence.

A small amount of paint chips and rust flakes are found on the ground near where the tire tracks end. Five feet away from the end of the tire tracks is an eight-foot indentation in the ground perpendicular to the tire tracks. A paper coffee cup and a crumpled paper bag are also found. Around the area are found shoe prints visible in the bare ground.

The fully clothed body of a young male is lying on his back at the foot of a pine tree. Prickly briars grow beside the tree. The Crime Scene Services Section Troopers notice a piece of cloth stuck in the dormant yet formidable briars. The team prepares to carefully move the body to search for evidence underneath it. They find the ground has frozen around it. After gently prying it loose, the area is searched.

Investigators notice the ground under the body is not completely frozen and is slightly damp. No blood is visible anywhere but, a bright red substance is seen in the victim's blond hair and on the back of his collar. Small rust flakes are noticed on his clothes and the ground underneath. The victim is checked for further evidence.