

Crime and Trauma Scene Safety for Apartment Managers

Many apartment managers have had the unfortunate experience of dealing with a suicide, homicide, natural death with decomposition, clandestine drug lab or gross filth situation, from a personal and/or business standpoint. This article is intended to serve as a guide through these situations.

It does not matter if this is the first crime/trauma scene you've dealt with or the hundredth, every scene is different and disturbing. The safety of you, your staff, and those at or near the scene is the single most important issue, and following these guidelines and suggestions can help ensure everyone's safety and the professional manner in which the crime and trauma scene is handled. Being prepared and knowledgeable will ensure the minimizing of hazardous exposure for the personnel at the scene, decrease the psychological damage that can occur, and help you and your staff to remain calm and professional throughout the traumatic situation.

The following list, has vital information. Please take a moment to review this information and keep it somewhere easy to find in the event of a crime or trauma incident.

DO:

- Do call 911 if you have experienced, witnessed, discovered, or suspected a suicide, homicide, rape, assault, or accident.
- Do prevent all staff, family, and friends from entering a residence, crime scene, or potentially contaminated area.
- Do avoid all walkways or areas where other people such as emergency medical personnel or law enforcement may have tracked biohazardous materials or evidence into and/or out of a contaminated area.
- Do answer questions from law enforcement and emergency personnel as quickly and accurately as possible.
- Do answer questions with factual and pertinent information only and stay nearby in case you are needed for further questioning.
- Do wrap your shoes, if entry is necessary, with several plastic bags before entering a released scene to assess the situation.
- Do remove bags upon finishing your assessment. Handle only the non-contaminated parts of the bags and leave bags in the contaminated area.
- Do treat anything contaminated with blood, body fluids, and/or tissue as medical waste.
- Do call a professional decontamination company to properly clean blood, body fluids, tissue, feces, or gross filth to ensure the waste is sent to a medical waste disposal facility and all OSHA standards are met. Make sure the decontamination company supplies you with a Certificate of Treatment to prove that your waste was disposed of in accordance with state law to protect your company against future litigation.

DO NOT:

- Do not enter a residence, crime scene, or potentially contaminated area unless it is necessary to administer medical attention or remove someone, including you, from harm's way.
- Do not say anything to the media that you do not want to see in print! Media personnel will want to talk to you. Where the media is concerned, there is no such thing as - off the record.
- Do not talk to the media unless you are the designated "media contact" for your company.
- Do not answer questions to law enforcement personnel with lengthy, rambling explanations or personal opinions, unless you are asked to do so.
- Do not answer questions from anyone other than uniformed police officers, detectives, crime scene technicians, and forensic examiners.
- Do not enter a crime scene, residence, or potentially contaminated area until law enforcement has completed their investigation and/or released the scene.
- DO NOT TOUCH ANYTHING!** Do not attempt to remove medical waste such as blood, body fluids, tissue, feces, or gross filth on your own.