



San Diego Community College District Police Department Policy and Procedures

4.02 EYEWITNESS IDENTIFICATION

EFF. 10/01/19

I. PURPOSE

This Department procedure establishes guidelines for conducting eyewitness identifications.

II. SCOPE

This procedure applies to all members of the Department.

III. BACKGROUND

Eyewitness identification procedures are among the most important procedures that law enforcement agencies employ to apprehend and convict criminals. They must be reliable and fair. Police procedures that suggest the guilt of a suspect to a victim or an eyewitness are improper and must be avoided, even where there is other evidence to connect the suspect to the crime. The witness' recollection, unaided by outside influence, must govern the identification.

IV. DEFINITIONS

- A. Curbside Line-up - an identification procedure in which a suspect is presented singly to the victim or witness shortly after a crime takes place and is conducted in the field. Its purpose is to quickly identify or release the suspect.
 - B. Line-up - an identification procedure in which a suspect is placed in a live group setting and presented to a witness. If a line-up is to be conducted, it should take place as soon as practicable after the arrest of the suspect.
 - C. Photographic Line-up - an identification procedure in which a suspect's photograph is placed with other photographs and presented to a witness.
 - D. Sequential Photographic Line-up - a method of presenting a photographic line-up where witnesses view only one member of a line-up at a time. Witnesses view all persons/photographs even if an identification was made before all photographs have
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been viewed.

V. **SEQUENTIAL PHOTOGRAPHIC LINE-UP**

- A. Except in very rare instances, photographic line-ups should be conducted by investigative personnel only.
- B. Generally, only sequential photographic line-ups will be used.
- C. There should be at least four photographs in addition to the suspect's photograph. The suspect's photograph should be arranged in random order with other photographs when the sequential photographic line-up is presented to a victim or eyewitness.
- D. Case agents can present the sequential photo line-up(s). After reading the admonishment, each individual photo in the sequential line-up will be shown one at a time. After the witness has had sufficient time to look at a photo, it should be returned back to the presenter and then the next photo should be shown. As the witness looks at each photo, the case agent or presenter should ask, "Is this the person who [describe act committed]?" If the answer is no, move on to the next photo. If the answer is yes, follow-up with, "How certain are you of your selection?" The witness's exact answer must be documented for any "yes" answer. **Even if an identification is made, continue showing all of the remaining photos in the line-up.**
- E. After one presentation has been completed, do not repeat a second showing unless asked to do so by the witness. If requested, show all photos in the line-up again, in the same order, and document any additional comments. Only show the sequential line-up two times. If the display is shown more than twice, the witness is likely to be "comparison shopping" i.e., guessing. The case agent or presenter's report must indicate how many times the sequential line-up was shown. Every attempt should be made to audiotape the sequential line-up with the witness.
- F. An adequate record of each photograph shown and what order they were shown in must be made. Photographs must be preserved so that the display can be reconstructed at trial.
- G. No person has a right to have an attorney present at any pictorial identification procedure, whether it takes place before or after an arrest or before or after criminal proceedings have been initiated against the suspect.
- H. If a detective from another agency conducts a line-up at your request, be sure to personally speak to the detective prior to any preliminary hearing in the matter so that you will be able to testify to the results of the line-up.

VI. CURBSIDE LINE-UP**A. General Procedures**

The victim/witness should always be brought to view the suspect. There are three exceptions to the general rule of "bring the witness to the suspect."

1. Probable Cause to Arrest

If you have probable cause to arrest the suspect, you may transport him to the witness or witnesses for identification. (In re Rafael [1982] 132 Cal.App.3d 977.)

Note: If there is any doubt as to whether probable cause to arrest exists, do not move the suspect unless consent is obtained or it is impracticable to bring the witness (see below).

2. Consent

If you obtain the valid, voluntary consent of a detainee to move him to the witness for a line-up, the movement is lawful. (People v. Harris [1975] 15 Cal 3d 384,391.)

3. Impracticality

If it is impossible or impractical to bring the witness to the suspect, the courts will often permit the movement of the suspect to the witness.

a. The Witness is Injured

If the witness is injured or is otherwise unable to be moved, it is clearly permissible to transport the suspect to the witness. (Stoval v. Denno [1967] 388 U.S. 293), In Re Carlos M. (1990) 220 Cal.App.3d 372.

b. Availability of Officers is Limited

If the detention occurs in an area where there are not enough officers to secure the scene, chase other suspects, or transport witnesses, etc., courts have permitted the immediate transportation of the suspect to the witness. (People v. Gatch [1976] 56 Cal.App.3d505.) However, this option should be avoided unless absolutely necessary.

B. Suggestions

It is unfair, and therefore a violation of due process under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments, for you to "suggest in any way" to the witness that a suspect to be

observed at a line-up committed the crime.

C. Suggestiveness before the Identification

You must avoid any conduct prior to the identification which might be ruled suggestive.

1. Never tell the witness:

- a. You caught (or think you caught) the person who committed the crime.
- b. The victim's property was in the suspect's possession.
- c. The suspect made admissions or confessed to the crime.
- d. The person to be observed is a "suspect" (do not use the word "suspect" at all).

2. Always tell the witness:

- a. To keep an open mind.
- b. The person who committed the crime may or may not be among those present.
- c. Just because the person is in custody does not mean he/she committed the crime (this applies only in situations where it will be obvious that the person is in custody).
- d. Not to talk to any other witness about the identification.

D. Officer Conduct

Officers should not say or do anything during the line-up that would draw the attention of a witness to the suspect. To avoid problems, try not to say or do anything during the identification.

E. Witness Conduct

1. When more than one witness is to view the line-up, explain that each must view the line-up separately.
2. Do not permit any witness to hear another's comments at the identification or to "compare notes" about the description of the perpetrator(s).

3. One-on-One Confrontations

- a. A one-on-one confrontation between the suspect and a witness or victim is automatically suggestive just because there is only one person to look at and he/she is already in police custody.
 - b. Nevertheless, the courts reluctantly make an exception to the general rule (that the suspect deserves a full line-up) because a line-up held shortly after the offense benefits everyone. The witness has the culprit's image fresh in mind, so an innocent suspect gets released immediately, and the police can go on with their investigation while the trail is still fresh. (*Stoval v. Denno* [1967] 388 U.S. 293; *People v. Gomez* [1976] 63 Cal.App.3d 328.)
4. The courts will not uphold a line-up if it was too suggestive. In deciding this question, and the lineup's validity, they try to balance all the circumstances, including:
- a. The witnesses' opportunity to view the perpetrator at the crime (length of time, lighting, distance, etc.).
 - b. The witnesses' degree of attention at the time of the crime (was he/she concentrating to remember the perpetrator's looks).
 - c. The amount of time that went by between the crime and the line-up (probably this should not be more than an hour or two at the most; however, a four-hour period has been upheld in a case where all of the other factors have been strong).
 - d. The physical set-up of the line-up itself (did the officer say "leading" things, how was the suspect positioned, where was he/she located, etc.).
 - e. The accuracy and detail of the witnesses' prior description.
 - f. The certainty of the witnesses' identification of the line-up. (*Neil v. Biggers* [1972] 409 U.S. 188; *People v. Nash* [1982] 129 Cal.App.3d 513.)

Example: The witnesses had an excellent chance to look at the robber for 15 minutes from close distances. Circumstances "encouraged" them to remember his/her face. The line-up took place within 20 minutes at the defendant's motel. Descriptions given were accurate. The identification was upheld. (*People v. Smith* [1980] 112 Cal.App.3d 37.)

Example: A line-up took place 45 minutes after a murder. The defendant was

on the curb in handcuffs with many officers and patrol vehicles present. However, the police did not use the word "suspect," specifically advised the witnesses that the murderer might not be the person they would be looking at, and reminded them to keep an open mind. The identification was upheld. (People v. Odom [1980] 108 Cal.App.3d 100.)

Example: A line-up took place less than one hour after a rape. The victim had a "clear view" of the perpetrator in daylight. The line-up took place on a city street with the suspect not handcuffed. The victim had given an accurate description and was positive of her identification. The identification was upheld. (People v. Kilpatrick [1980] 105 Cal.App.3d 401.)

F. Suggestiveness after the Identification

1. You must avoid any conduct after the identification that might be ruled suggestive.
2. If you tell a witness that he/she has picked the "right" (or "wrong") person, it may jeopardize the admissibility of later in-court identification.

G. Completing Curbside Line-up Form and Arrest Report

1. Include in the body of the Arrest Report the location where the line-up was conducted, the lighting conditions, and in general how the line-up was conducted (e.g., the suspect stood under a streetlight in handcuffs and was illuminated by police vehicle headlights; the victim was driven in the front seat of the police car and viewed the suspect from a distance of 20 feet).
2. There is room on the Curbside Line-up Form for these responses either at the beginning of the form or in the narrative section after the victim/witness statement has been written. The extra space can be utilized for these comments. The Curbside Line-up form is located on the Department's G-Drive.