

THE PRINCIPLE OF EXPEDITION IN FORENSIC SCIENCE

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ABSTRACT: In forensic science, the principle of expedition is expressed by immediate acting. It has special meaning particularly in the scene of crime examinations. The time from the notification about the crime to the beginning of scene of crime examination should be as short as possible. This time depends on various factors as, for example, distance from scene of crime to the police station, daytime, category of event, number of offences in the day. The researches of 300 documentations of proceedings, which were made in one of the Polish police station, revealed that only half of scenes of crime examinations begin in time less than 90 minutes from the notifications.

KEY WORDS: Scene of crime, Principle of expedition.

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Forensic Science deals with problems connected with criminal prosecution which is based on defined laws and canons of behaviour. Any discretion of procedure is not possible if a criminal procedure involves a person.

Obedying rules and principles of procedure – which are often agreed upon – and not included in legal acts of higher category but only implied in theory and practice is very important for the validity of undertaken action and for its result as an evidence which cannot be over estimated.

Organised and planned activity in procedural law and in forensic science is based on fixed principles. The characteristic quality of forensic science is that various subjects are responsible for carrying out a number of different activities.

Forensic principles show steps of planned and organised procedure and recommend certain behaviour of all people involved in the activities. Forensic principles indicate the way of operating while carrying out different activities, define the kind and features of the results of the activity, they concern integrity of the people indeed in the press.

Forensic principles are patterns to be followed expressed as directives. They have evolved for a number of years and their system is still undergoing the process of evolution. Forensic principles rise from principles of criminal proceedings, research into the theory of forensic science, forensic experi-

ence, various disciplines mostly social science and praxeology praxis. A forensic principles should be of basic importance for forensic science, should directly refer to the discipline and guarantee the rights of everybody involved in the activity. In addition it cannot double any other principle or be its logical consequence. At present, the catalogue of general forensic principles is as follows: the principle of activity, efficiency, economy, individuality, one person decision making, objectivism, keeping written records, planning, expedition, confidentiality and versatility.

The principle of expedition is a general forensic principle but it is much more closely related to certain activities or their stages. It happens when the activities are performed when a crime is reported. The forensic principle of expedition derives from the law of criminal proceedings. For example it is obligatory for the police to immediately undertake an action. Criminal procedure should be carried out efficiently and economically without any delay.

Edmund Locard once wrote: “The passing time is the truth that disappears from view”, the principle of expedition can be neglected only if it could negatively affect the detection of material truth. The principle of expedition is of basic importance especially at the scene of crime. That is why such examination must be carried out immediately after a crime is reported. Any delay results in natural or deliberate destruction of traces and makes it impossible to chase the offender. Moreover any people moving around at the scene of crime leave new traces which can create a false picture of the crime. Furthermore, weather conditions (temperature and humidity changes, rain, snow, strong wind) can also be the cause of such alternations. Besides the offender can try to remove proofs of his activity.

As a directive the principle of expedition of examination at the scene of crime is formulated as follows: “Examination of the scene of crime must be carried out expeditiously”.

It means that such examination must be carried out immediately after the crime is reported. Arrival at the scene of crime must taken efficiently should be the first activity of police. Delay in examination can result in failure of the whole investigation. There have been many cases when a fingerprint revealed on the surface of on object, a piece of paper, a few hairs, footwear marks or other traces solved most complicated crime. However any trace can be damaged if the police don't arrive on time. Examination procedure depends on the following:

- the composition of examination team,
- how far police station is from the scene of crime,
- season of the year,
- time of the day,
- weather conditions,
- traffic density,

- number of crimes during a shift,
- kind of crime,
- the efficiency of duty officer.

How at the new millennium realisation of principle of expedition by Polish police presents itself? What is the speed of reaction on notification about a crime?

Records of 300 crimes come into being in 1999 in region of activity of police command on the area of a city about the surface 85 km² were examined. In the city there are five districts in which over 120 000 persons live. Obtained results are presented in Table I.

TABLE I. TIME FROM RECEIPT OF INFORMATION ABOUT CRIME TO BEGINNING OF SCENE OF CRIME EXAMINATION

No.	Time from receipt of information about crime to beginning of scene of crime examination	Number of crimes	Proportional participation of numbers of crimes
1.	0–9 minutes	9	3
2.	10–19 minutes	26	8.7
3.	20–29 minutes	31	10.3
4.	30–59 minutes	104	34.7
5.	60–89 minutes	63	21
6.	90–119 minutes	43	14.3
7.	120–159 minutes	16	5.3
8.	160–210 minutes	8	2.7
	Together	300	100

Ranking of speed activity of police officers was following:

1. 30–59 minutes: 104,
2. 60–89 minutes: 63,
3. 90–119 minutes: 43,
4. 20–29 minutes: 31,
5. 10–19 minutes: 26,
6. 120–159 minutes: 16,
7. 0–9 minutes: 9,
8. 160–210 minutes: 8.

Most of all indications were obtained in temporary section 30 to 59 minutes, because till 104 which state 34.7%. It means, that police officers undertake scene of crime examination between half to one hour since the information about crime was obtained. In first half of hour all indispensable acts connected with dispatch of police officers on place of crime become executed.

In first thirty minutes from the moment of receipt of information about a crime 66 activities were undertaken which state 22% of cases. If to take into account activities undertaken in next thirty minutes it shows, that in

general during the first hour from obtainment of information about a crime police officers began 56.7% of examinations.

In the second hour since notification about crime examinations are begun in 35.3% cases. During two hours since obtainment of information about crime examinations are undertaken in 92% cases.

Then relationship between speed of reaction of police on information about crime and two factors:

- type of crime,
- location of crime, which means distance from police command was compared.

TABLE II. TYPE OF CRIME IN COMPARISON TO TIME FROM RECEIPT OF INFORMATION ABOUT CRIME TO BEGINNING OF SCENE OF CRIME EXAMINATION

Type of crime	Time (in minutes)								Together
	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–59	60–89	90–119	120–159	160–210	
Theft with burglary	6	2	7	61	39	37	6	3	161
Theft	–	13	3	16	16	4	5	3	60
Road accident	–	4	12	7	–	–	–	–	23
Arson	–	–	5	1	–	–	–	–	6
Brigandage	–	6	1	1	1	2	1	–	12
Robbery	–	–	–	6	2	–	–	–	8
Manslaughter	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	–	2
Beating	3	1	2	9	3	–	–	1	19
Punishable threat	–	–	–	–	2	–	4	1	7
Releasing in circulation of forged money	–	–	1	1	–	–	–	–	2
Together	9	26	31	104	63	43	16	8	300

TABLE III. LOCATION OF CRIME IN COMPARISON TO TIME FROM RECEIPT OF INFORMATION ABOUT CRIME TO BEGINNING OF SCENE OF CRIME EXAMINATION

District	Time (in minutes)								Together
	0–9	10–19	20–29	30–59	60–89	90–119	120–159	160–210	
District 1	5	15	20	44	23	14	8	1	130
District 2	2	3	2	12	11	5	4	3	42
District 3	2	4	4	26	17	12	–	–	65
District 4	–	1	3	12	8	7	2	4	37
District 5	–	3	2	10	4	5	2	–	26
	9	26	31	104	63	43	16	8	300

Recapitulation:

1. The principle of expedition of beginning of examination orders to act: quick, impetuous, rapid, at full steam, immediate, sudden, hasty.
2. Time of reaction of police on information about a crime most often contains from 30 to 90 minutes. Only in 20% crimes beginning of examination follows in the first 30 minutes from the notification.
3. Type of crime does not have large meaning for the time of beginning of an examination. However the examinations of road accidents are begun most quickly – time of beginning contains in first 30 minutes from the notification.
4. Location of crime which means distance from police command is essential factor. Examinations of scenes of crime situated at the farthest district begun as the last are.
5. Except mentioned direct factors (type of crime and location of crime) in realisation of the principle of expedition it is necessary to regard indirect factors as: number of group of police officers, intensity of traffic movement, number of crimes in given day, efficiency of police officer on duty, technical police equipment.

We hope, that achievements of the new millennium will show directions of activities aiming to more effective realisation of the principle of expedition in crime detection.