



Recording The Incident

Forensic Science

- After the crime scene has been managed and the initial assessment (recording the original situation and how it was discovered) is complete, the forensic photographers arrive on the scene. The jury cannot revisit the scene of a crime during court sessions, so photographs can help to vividly recreate the scene as well as create a lasting record of the evidence so it can be properly analyzed in a forensic laboratory.

Recording

- Where memory fails, technology has replaced it, just as crime scene photography and videoing have replaced basic memory-based recounts of a crime scene with vivid live shots of the aftermath. Through this, accuracy is greatly improved and the film itself becomes a form of evidence.

The Camera

- Forensic photographers usually prefer to use 35 mm cameras, or medium format, as it tends to balance the portability and ease of use with quality images. When taking close-up photos of evidence, the camera is often mounted onto a tripod for stability to ensure the necessary quality required of photographs presented as evidence in court. Some forensic labs have their own darkroom facilities, which then enable photographers to develop the pictures themselves.

Digital Cameras

- Digital cameras have a number of advantages when used in forensic photography as they require no chemical processing, can be displayed on the camera straight after being taken to ensure that the image was captured and the photos can be immediately transferred to a computer and stored in the database. However, digital photos are very easy to alter which therefore prevents them from being used as evidence in court.

Video Cameras

- Video cameras also provide an easy and inexpensive way to document crime scenes and can give the jury with a more realistic sense of the crime scene than still pictures of a room. The zoom on video cameras are however, more often digital rather than optical and thus provide pictures of slightly less clarity than actual photographs. Videos are in general a good briefing tool for police officers who have not visited the crime scene.

Techniques

- Close-up shots of evidence have precise requirements, such as exactness, angle taken and balance, in order to achieve the best possible shots. These pictures of evidence form a factual record and must be able to be reproduced in terms of size, shape and color, thus, balance and accuracy is an absolute must. The use of basic camera flash and flood lights are quite sufficient for general crime scene photography, but close-up shots of evidence require careful lighting. Artificial sources of light have proved very useful in the photography of evidence. An example of this concerns oblique-angled light, whereby the light is angled or slanted towards the subject. This is used for bringing out the detail in textured surfaces, such as foot and shoe prints left in mud.

Light

- With the help of colored filters and adaptable light-guides, lamps can direct a narrow beam of light at the subject of the photograph to enhance the object details. Different light filters also allow for the exposure of distinct evidence. For example, ultraviolet light can make stains and fingerprints glow, violet makes gunshot residue and blood more visible and blue and green lights are used with enhanced fingerprints to show up fibers and urine. This is because some materials absorb the ultraviolet light, while others reflect it, causing the material to become present under the ultraviolet light and flash of the camera when the photo is taken. A crime scene is also documented by writing down what the scene was like upon discovery, sketching, videoing, evidence tables to document artifacts found, voice recording and witness interviews.