

Photography and crime



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The impact of photo identification on criminal justice cannot be overemphasized. Photography is one of the means of evidence about a crime scene, others are taking field notes, sketching e. t. c. Some of the situations in which photography can serve as evidence for criminal justice include: traffic accident and hit and run cases, assault and injuries, suicide, homicide and burglary

These are some of the ways in which photography can help in criminal justice;

1. It allows for proper recording of events in crime scenes and related areas.
2. It serves as means of testifying in court trials and hearings.
3. It is a form of visual record for future use as a means of buttressing facts about the scene of the crime.
4. It is a form of objective evidence that the criminal actually appear at the scene of the crime.

Handling the Situation

Handling the situation in a crime scene is very important so as not to mar the evidence and a high level of professionalism is required.

The first professional approach to the situation is to ensure that the scene of the crime is secured. An overview photo of the crime scene must be taken and a basic sketch must be constructed. The fields note should also be taken.

All the above approaches will enable the photography to depict the way the crime scene appears. One can also discuss the various evidence aside the photographs with other investigator in the crime.

Each crime scene is unique and the nature of photographs needed will be determined at the scene, by the fact-seeker that is familiar with the crime.

Taking the following scenario into consideration;

Homicide: color film is preferred, picture may include that of entrance to the scene, evidence outside the building and adjoining and linking rooms, evidence may also include that of struggling, weaponry, view of various positions of witnesses and autopsy pictures is also very important.

Suicide: you can photograph the scene as for homicide

Burglaries: exterior and the interior of the building, residents, damage to safe and locks and also the doors. Photographs of items left at the scene of the crime are also important.

Assault and Injury: the photograph of facial appearance of suspects, injury and bites

Accident and Hit and Run situations: photograph of the scene and the relationship of the vehicle to each other are all important

1. Depict the scene as you met it and don't move any object to another position other than how you met it.
2. Always take two photograph copies of the items of evidence to strengthen your fact . i. e. a close-up view
3. While taking the photograph, don't destroy the evidence.

4. Take multidimensional view of the items of evidence e. g. damage vehicle in head on collision (horizontal, vertical, side view) and not just the corner or angular view only.
5. Take two photographs while using a measuring or a marking device. This will ensure that the defense cannot make a claim that the scene of the incidence was altered or that the device was hiding anything important.
6. For photographs taken in the night, use multiple flash ensure a good light source is available to delineate the images properly.
7. Ensure that the object pictured is germane and material to the issue on ground
8. Photographs should neither be misconstrued nor distort the scene or objects to be reproduced.
9. The photograph should not cause disadvantage or harm to the court or jury and should not appeal to their emotion.
10. Adequate and correct exposure of the photograph ensuring it has maximum depth of field and sharply and well focused by looking at the frame of the scene.
11. The photographer must be experienced and should have adequate knowledge about the care, handling, manipulation and protection of every aspect of the camerae. g the flash (whether manual, automatic dedicated TTL.

What to look out for and how to document it:

The following are important for proper documentation:

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-securing the scene of the crime.

-Fundamental sketch of the place.

-painstakingly recording each item of evidence.

-summary photograph of the area which is comprehensive (this will depict the scene exactly how it appears when first seen).

-taking an introductory notes.

-the documentation must also reflect an impeccable structural evidence e. g. make a photograph of the exterior of the building and related locale of the occurrence of the crime. Space photography of the scene may also be useful in some cases. The various photographs should reveal windows, doors, exits and entrance to the scene. The same also apply to the inside of the scene. All the wall inside the scene must be reflected in the photograph and the position of any other item of evidence must be well revealed.

Other importance of photo identification

1. Abuse and violation of human rights can be documented by the civilians and then displayed on the internet.

2. Photos can serve the functions of evidentiary or as a means of confession or as a means of freeing oneself from blame or guilt in the courtroom.

3. Photographs can also be used as a means of encouraging progressive changes or to document social reforms.

4. Photos were also used in the earlier centuries by prison administrators to decipher external signs e. g in physiognomy in which the features of

somebody's face are used as indicators or judgment of that person's character or temperament.