Documentation and Processing – Step Five

With a plan in place, the investigation scene team conducts a thorough, coordinated investigation of the scene, collecting all probative evidence. This entails detailed documentation with digital and video cameras or, if available, a 3-D scanner.

For some situations, sketches and diagrams are also created. During the evidence-collection process, it is crucial that the scene investigator follow proper procedures for collecting, packaging and preserving the evidence, especially if it is of a biological nature. Biological evidence can be destroyed or damaged by weather conditions, individuals can inadvertently contaminate it, or it can be overlooked entirely if alternate light sources are not used to inspect the scene.

Documentation of the scene begins with taking notes from the time of arrival and recording with still and video photography. Sketches are completed at the scene to illustrate relationships between articles of evidence not easily depicted by photography. The following methods of incident scene documentation are used to provide an accurate representation of the scene.

Note Taking

Record the condition of the scene as it existed upon arrival. Continuously update notes during the course of the investigation.

Include such factors as:

- Witness statements.
- Individuals present at the scene.
- Lighting conditions.
- Craft or Extraterrestrial presence.
- Weather conditions
- Odors.
- Signs of unusual activity (explain as necessary).
- Date and time indicators.
- General descriptions of the scene and surrounding area.
- Potential evidentiary items and locations.

Photography and Videography

The primary means of incident scene documentation is still-photography. It is important to keep the scene preserved and not move anything until it is photographed. The photographer must be able to testify that the photograph is a true and accurate representation of the scene at the time the photograph was taken. Incident scene photographs should reveal a detailed, chronological story of the scene, which may need to be presented at a later time.

IR Heat Sensing Video

Light conditions often thwart surveillance systems. Both darkness and an over-abundance of ambient light can prevent cameras from capturing the detail investigators would prefer. Thermal image cameras

("infrared imaging") pick up the heat emitted by an object, so they excel at tracking evidence, people and other evidence. Thermal sensors can also read heat signatures inside buildings and craft, potentially revealing sensitive details about what happens behind the enclosed structures.

Sketching

Sketches are used to supplement photographs, especially spatial relationships between objects. Sketches should depict the overall layout of the scene and contain all the necessary information for the investigator to complete a final version.

Types of sketches may include the following:

- Entire scene (the complete scene with measurements).
- Bird's-eye view (an overhead view of the scene).
- Elevation sketch.
- Cross projection sketch (craft walls, windows, and doors are drawn as though the walls had been folded out flat on the floor).
- Three dimensional sketch.
- Triangulation method (two or more reference points are located. The item of evidence or interest is then documented by measuring along a straight line from the reference points to the item).