



### **D42 The Importance of Forensic Photography in Domestic and International Forensic Operation**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have an increased understanding of the important role of forensic photography in domestic and international forensic operations.

Detailed photographic documentation is part of any forensic work. Specialists from many different fields often rely heavily on photographs to illustrate their work processes and results. Photos are acknowledged to be a very powerful tool in presenting forensic evidence to a non-scientific audience of law professionals and jury members in court. Despite the almost universally recognized and accepted importance of photography in forensic investigation, the photos are most often taken by insufficiently trained law enforcement personnel or by the forensic scientists themselves.

The reason for that is the common but misguided belief that anyone can take good photographs. A belief that has been recently strengthened by the arrival of digital and therefore instantly reviewable photography. This has led to far more images being taken but certainly had no positive effect on quality levels.

It is true that most people can take photographs and most of those will be acceptable. But to take good photographs, which can illustrate and accurately document evidence and processes, proper, standardized training and experience is necessary. In this, forensic photography is no different to any other profession. To acknowledge that forensic photography with its often challenging light and environmental conditions is a specialized field that needs equally specialized and appropriate training, is the first step in the right direction.

This presentation will show several different aspects to and roles of photography in forensic operations. It emphasizes the benefits the judicial system can experience if photography is not just limited to simple evidence documentation and how a more comprehensive approach to forensic photography can strongly support other forms of documentation and therefore strengthen the legal process. The presentation will highlight a few key principles of forensic photography and how proper standards can be achieved.

Through a number of examples, the presentation will show how beneficial photography can be to prosecutors' offices and the courts, as well as demonstrating how insufficient photography can leave the expert witness in the difficult position of not being able to demonstrate their work and results to its optimal potential. Every forensic practitioner must be aware that a photograph not taken or taken badly is a missed opportunity, which can very rarely be rectified. Many forensic processes happen only once and can not be repeated.

It will also be demonstrated how non-forensic, humanitarian missions can enjoy the same benefits from high quality photography.

Although the importance of good photographic evidence is obvious, operations with limited budgets may be reluctant to commit to employ a full time photographer. This difficult and understandable position many teams find themselves in will be addressed and possible solutions presented.

#### **Forensic Photography, Evidential Photography, Methodological Documentation**