



### **D39 A Crime Scene That Included Six Vehicles, Fifty-Eight Cartridge Casings, and Over Twenty Homes: Using a Different Method of Sketching to Document Large Scenes**

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After attending this presentation, attendees will have learned an alternative method for sketching large or non-traditional crime scenes.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by providing alternative documentation methods that can be used at crime scenes where traditional textbook methods are not feasible or effective.

In March 2001, police were called to a shooting in a suburban Atlanta neighborhood. Almost immediately the 911 system was flooded with calls from the same general area, regarding more shots fired, vehicles leaving the scene driving at high rates of speed, and a deceased victim dumped in a neighborhood park. Victims suffering from gunshot wounds showed up at local hospitals, and crime scenes with vehicles related to the case were located. Not long after the initial call it was determined the initial shooting occurred at the home of the prime suspect in the recent assassination of the incumbent Sheriff and a former police officer.

Due to the nature of the case, all hands were on deck. The primary scene included fifty-eight cartridge casings, four vehicles, and over twenty homes. Questions began to arise as to the documentation of the scene in a timely manner. Since the shooting encompassed an entire subdivision, there was concern with keeping families out of their homes for an extended period of time. Also, deciding where to begin documentation of the scene was a difficult task when in addition to a primary scene there was a separate death scene, a bullet-ridden vehicle from the scene found on the interstate, and another vehicle presumably used to transport the deceased victim to the park, abandoned in a wooded area. When there are four scenes related to a homicide and two crime scene investigators on duty, where and how should the documentation begin? Not only must these scenes be worked in a timely manner, but no stone can be left unturned. Additionally while this murder investigation was beginning, it was also tied to the active murder investigation of the incumbent sheriff, a law enforcement officer.

In this case, it was determined that the traditional method of using triangulation or rectangular coordinates would be too time consuming and cumbersome for a scene of its size. Therefore the scene was divided into twenty foot sections and sketched using paint, photography, and a spreadsheet. This method provided adequate documentation of the scene and was presented in court.

Therefore, proper documentation procedures can be employed even if the standard procedures are deemed to be an inefficient method due to the circumstances of a large scene or multiple scenes that must be worked consecutively. Finally teamwork between all investigators and members of the forensic science community is essential in non-traditional scenes to get the job done legally, correctly, and efficiently.

#### **Crime Scene Investigation, Sketching, Documentation**