



Jurisprudence Section - 2015

F17 Crime Scene Investigator: Assessment of Expert Credentials

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After attending this presentation, attendees will be provided with a thought-provoking evaluation of the many variables that are considered for the determination of a Crime Scene Investigator (CSI) as an expert for the court. Variable perspectives will highlight the many aspects of a CSI's qualifications when considered as an expert witness. Information will include regional variations in the qualifications required to become a CSI, disparity between the qualifications of CSIs in large urban agencies vs. smaller rural agencies, comparison between sworn law enforcement officers vs. civilian CSIs, and an assessment of certified vs. non-certified practitioners.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by highlighting the many facets considered when identifying the qualifications necessary for a CSI to be distinguished as an expert witness.

After the first responding patrol officer arrives at a crime scene, the CSI is commonly the first individual specially trained to conduct an in-depth investigation for recognizing the value of relationships between statements, physical evidence, and crime scene observations. In particular, the CSI functions to recognize, document, collect, and preserve relevant physical evidence in order to generate a representation of events and circumstances about the crime. The information, physical evidence, and data obtained from a successful crime scene investigation provide the preliminary basis for any subsequent forensic investigations, testing, and analysis. Essentially, the CSI establishes framework for which the investigation, both criminal and scientific, is based. With such a large responsibility for providing a successful crime scene investigation, there would appear to be the expectation that the CSI is specially trained and proficient in his or her skills. So what qualifications would be used in the determination of a CSI as an expert witness in court?

Job descriptions from various regions of the United States represent a disparity in the requirements sought to perform the duties of the position. Furthermore, the demands and resources of larger, more urban agencies may represent a significant difference from smaller, more rural agencies. There are organizations that provide certification options for CSIs, but does a certification provide all that is necessary? Does the lack of a certification eliminate a candidate from providing expert testimony? These variables and inquiries will be reviewed to generate thought-provoking and insightful dialog.

Crime Scene Investigator, Expert Witness, Expert Credentials