

F41 The Forensic Use of Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) Surveillance Cameras in Italy: A Standard Procedure in Criminal Investigations to Enhance the Impact on Decision Making

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Learning Overview: The objective of this presentation is to share the Italian experience and its related protocol to improve the evidential use of images in criminal trials. In many states and jurisdictions, there are still no such rules and protocols.

Impact on the Forensic Science Community: This presentation will impact the forensic science community through the increased competence in the use of images by investigators, as well as representing a good practice of collaboration between academics and investigators.

Often CCTV is a powerful tool in criminal investigations for many types of crime. Video and images contain important information on “who, when, and how” the crime has been committed. They also provide useful evidence in court. Today, the forensic value of video and images is limited by several factors. Those factors include the lack of a standard procedure for the collection by investigators and experts in a forensic way such that the evidence can be admitted at trial.

In Italy, there is no operative procedure on the use of images in criminal proceedings. Investigators do not have rules on identification, preservation, or the collection and analysis of video and images of CCTV surveillance cameras. Recent judgments of the Supreme Court have declared this type of evidence not admissible because it has not been handled in a forensic manner.

Because of the increasing use of images in criminal trials, Italian universities in collaboration with Polizia di Stato have drafted an investigative check list. Polizia di Stato (Italian State Police) asked the University of Foggia and the University of Catania to create an operating protocol to be distributed among its investigators throughout the country, after having subjected it to multiple verification processes to ensure its reliability.

This verification process has been thus standardized: (1) questionnaires distributed to all investigators of Polizia di Stato on their investigative habits on CCTV surveillance cameras; (2) elaboration of the questionnaires and drafting of the protocol by academic experts of criminal procedure and of computer science; (3) sharing of the protocol with prosecutor offices; (4) disclosure of the operative protocol through lectures presented to all investigators of Polizia di Stato; (5) experimentation of the operative protocol; (6) results of the experimentation and possible modifications of the protocol; and (7) official acquisition of the investigative protocol as an intervention guideline.

The protocol covers all stages of the investigation, including verification, identification and system description, preservation, collection and evidence acquisition, chain of custody, presentation, and reporting results. The parties involved are the investigating officer, the legal advisor, and a digital forensic expert.

Surveillance Cameras, Criminal Trials, Operative Protocols