



Disclaimer:

As a condition to the use of this document and the information contained herein, the SWGIT requests notification by e-mail before or contemporaneously to the introduction of this document, or any portion thereof, as a marked exhibit offered for or moved into evidence in any judicial, administrative, legislative, or adjudicatory hearing or other proceeding (including discovery proceedings) in the United States or any foreign country. Such notification shall include: 1) the formal name of the proceeding, including docket number or similar identifier; 2) the name and location of the body conducting the hearing or proceeding; 3) the name, mailing address (if available) and contact information of the party offering or moving the document into evidence. Subsequent to the use of this document in a formal proceeding, it is requested that SWGIT be notified as to its use and the outcome of the proceeding. Notifications should be sent to: SWGIT@yahoogroups.com

Redistribution Policy:

SWGIT grants permission for redistribution and use of all publicly posted documents created by SWGIT, provided that the following conditions are met:

1. Redistributions of documents, or parts of documents, must retain the SWGIT cover page containing the disclaimer.
2. Neither the name of SWGIT, nor the names of its contributors, may be used to endorse or promote products derived from its documents.

Any reference or quote from a SWGIT document must include the version number (or create date) of the document and mention if the document is in a draft status.



Section 20

Recommendations and Guidelines for Crime Scene/Critical Incident Videography

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this document is to provide recommendations and guidelines for the use of video camcorders to document crime scenes and critical incidents. Crime scene/critical incident videography should not replace or take precedence over still photography, but can be used as an additional investigative or demonstrative tool.

INTRODUCTION

Crime scene/critical incident videography augments still photography by providing a portrayal of the crime scene that gives the jury a sense of being there. Crime scene/critical incident videography can provide the context of the scene or event and give perspective of the entire relevant area. It can also depict the relationship of items of importance to each other and the physical landmarks within the scene.

Commonly Documented Incidents

- Homicides, suicides, questionable death, arson, violent crimes
- Natural disasters: floods, hurricanes, weather related incidents
- Other disasters: terrorism incidents, bombings and explosions, mass transit/plane crashes, hazardous material incidents
- Crowd control incidents
- Evidentiary demonstrations/re-enactments
- Officer involved shootings

Equipment

Sample Checklist

- Video camcorder
- AC adapter
- Fully charged batteries / charger
- Power inverter
- Video light with charger
- Appropriate media for camcorder
- Sturdy fluid head tripod (with quick release)
- Lens cleaning solution and non-abrasive lint-free cloth

- External microphone (wireless or wired)
- Headphones or earphones
- Audio shorting plug (to disable audio)
- Duct or gaffer's tape
- Identification placards/slates
- Camera bag/hard case
- Rain cover for camera
- Lens cap
- Appropriate video/audio cables
- Rubber gloves, masks, cloth or rubber booties and other personal protective equipment (PPE)

Maintenance

- Proper care and maintenance of equipment should be based on manufacturer recommendations.
- Continued proper operation of key components should be verified and documented according to agency policy on a regular basis.

Training

Personnel responsible for video documentation should have an understanding of the fundamentals of videography, knowledge of video recording technology/equipment used and a basic knowledge of commonly accepted crime scene procedures. The ability of a videographer to properly document a scene should be established and maintained through practical experience and training, both formal and on the job.

General Documentation Procedures

- Prior to arrival at scene, verify all equipment is available and in proper working order. The date/time generator of the equipment should also be verified for accuracy.
- Upon arrival, confer with lead investigator. The investigator and videographer should walk through the scene without video equipment, noting all evidence or items of importance. The scene should be cleared of all personnel during video recording.
- The scene should be documented in the exact condition the videographer found it upon his/her arrival.
- Per agency policy, start video documentation with a placard/slate containing information to include date, time, location, videographer and case number, if applicable. See Appendix A for an example placard/slate. A brief audio recording of this information is also acceptable.

- Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, audio should not be recorded during documentation. This is to ensure the integrity of the scene and prevent unrelated conversations from being captured. In instances where audio is required, it should be monitored for proper recording.
- All camera movements including pans, zooms and tilts should be conducted in a slow, smooth, and deliberate manner.
- Recordings may be paused and restarted. If possible, similar landmarks or items should be used as points of reference.
- Documentation of the scene should begin with a slow 360° pan of the exterior and surrounding area from a fixed position to document landmarks, lighting, traffic, and other investigative factors.
- Record video throughout the scene showing the location and proximity of important items in relation to one another. Starting with the main point of entry, capture general images, proceeding to medium range images, and concluding with close-ups.
- Confirm with the lead investigator that all locations and items of importance have been documented.
- If additional items not previously identified are located, document those items in the same manner.
- Confer with the lead investigator and conduct a brief visual verification of the recording prior to leaving the scene.
- Though the length of the video will be dependent on the complexity of the scene, an effort should be made to be as concise as possible. As an example, a single location with few items of importance should take no longer than twenty minutes.

Evidence Handling Procedures

This section addresses procedures to follow when the recorded video may be used as evidence. These procedures are intended to protect the video from physical damage, accidental erasure, or other alterations.

Tape Based Media:

- Remove the write protect tab from the tape cassette or slide the tab to the "SAVE" mode.
- The tape should be labeled with agency, videographer, location, date, time and case number if applicable.
- Protect the tape from magnetic fields such as those found near police radios, electric motors, solenoids and metal detectors.

- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight and excessive heat/humidity. Storage and transportation should be in a cool and dry environment.
- Create a copy of the original tape and review the copy. For review purposes, the original tape should not be played or paused. All review should be done on working copies. All copies and originals should be marked as such and handled in accordance with agency policy.

File Based (Digital) Media:

- If possible, separate media should be used for each crime scene. Since the storage media may not be able to be labeled (e.g. internal camcorder hard drive), the placards/slides recorded at the beginning of each scene should be used to assist in the differentiation between scenes.
- Protect the storage media (e.g. removable card, internal camcorder hard drive) from magnetic fields such as those found near police radios, electric motors, solenoids and metal detectors.
- Avoid exposure to direct sunlight and excessive heat/humidity. Storage and transportation should be in a cool and dry environment.
- After returning from the scene, download copies of the original digital files to an appropriate storage device/media. A working copy of these files should be created for review.
- Once the copies of the original digital files are archived and verified, data remaining on the original recording media/device may be deleted. If deemed necessary, a forensic wipe of the original recording media/device may be performed. For more information, see SWGIT document "*Best Practices for Archiving Digital and Multimedia Evidence (DME) in the Criminal Justice System*".
- Working copies should be prepared as a commonly accepted file format and labeled appropriately. These copies may be distributed in accordance with agency policy.

Exhibit Preparation for Judicial Proceedings

The videographer should have a basic working knowledge of his/her respective jurisdictions' legal processes. This knowledge should include familiarity with rules of evidence as they pertain to admissibility and reliability.

Appendix A

Sample Identification Placard/Slate



Video Identification Card

Case Number:	Date / Time:
Location:	
Videographer:	Lead Investigator:
Comments:	