

BOOK REVIEWS

Lt. Jill Hill¹ and Master Sergeant Michael Trummel¹

Review of: *Practical Crime Scene Processing and Investigation*

Review of: *Crime Scene Processing Laboratory Manual and Workbook*

REFERENCE: Gardner RM. *Practical crime scene processing and investigation*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, 2004, 416 pp.
Hayden D. *Crime scene processing laboratory manual and workbook*, CRC Press, Boca Raton, 2004.

The title of the book lends itself to the descriptive nomenclature of the materials contained within. The initial impression of the book is that it is a well-organized, common sense approach to understanding crime scenes and describing the methodology of evidence collection. This book would best serve students in a structured forensic science course or newly assigned crime scene technicians due to its fundamental nature. It is not a book that deals with investigative know-how, rather it focuses specifically on the elements of crime scene investigation. The author remains true to his stated focus, which is, "what crime scene investigators do, how they actually do it, and how to decide in what order they will do it."

The author adequately addresses the six basic steps of crime scene processing and the methods integral to good scene documentation. Recording the physical as well as testimonial evidence at every scene is germane to successful prosecution. The book covers basic crime scene photography to include overall, mid range, and close range photography as well as common problems encountered. Use of scales, evidence orientation, and lighting techniques are all discussed and continually reinforced throughout the manual. For example, when discussing collection of impression evidence, he reiterates the importance of using good photographic techniques to capture the minutia. The author outlines proper scene documentation, however, the reader must consider the subjective nature of report writing as well as their particular agency's policies and procedures. Samples offered in the book contrast in their use of first person versus third person writing tense, however, since the focus of this book is a reference for overall scene processing, the specific differences in the writing styles is not a significant deterrent.

Although the evidence collection portions of the book were factually accurate, the reviewers did find areas of discrepancy between

their agency's standards and those presented. Examples of these differences include the casting of tool mark impressions on wooden surfaces and photographs displaying casting material preparation without the use of protective measures, such as gloves. Transitions between topics were sometimes fragmented leaving the reader feeling as if they were about to learn one topic, but not before learning another. For example, Chapter 9 is titled "Basic Skills for Scene Processing," but begins with nine pages about alternate light sources. Given the cost and training associated with using alternate light sources, this topic seems to be ill placed in a chapter pertaining to basic skills. The segment regarding crime scene sketching was more complete than the material found in most manuals. The author seems to favor the triangulation method but did not offer the negative aspects of triangulation. As a "reference for novices to the field" the author should have gone into more detail regarding description and identification of reference points. The remaining six measuring methods were mentioned, however, more detail should have been provided concerning the pros and cons of each of these methods. The focus should be on letting the scene dictate the measuring method and not the preference of one measuring method over another.

The inclusion of numerous case examples, diagrams and demonstrative photographs aid in defining procedures inherent to good evidence collection. The complimentary workbook, written by Donald Hayden, provides hands-on experiments, which serve to illustrate and strengthen the basic concepts presented in the textbook. In addition to the practical, hands-on training, the workbook also includes word puzzles that test the reader's ability to recall key words and phrases from the textbook.

The book serves as a strong foundation for forensic students or novice crime scene investigators. The information is sufficiently condensed to present the reader with a good overall basis of knowledge regarding issues and practices specific to the role of a crime scene investigator.

¹ Illinois State Police, Crime Scene Services Command, 124 E. Adams, Room A300, P.O. Box 19461, Springfield, IL.