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Forensics in the field: The need for crime laboratory personnel as incident responders

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One of the age old questions in the forensic lab is who makes better crime responders? Police personnel trained in evidence collection by forensic personnel or forensic personnel that respond to the scene themselves? From the author's point of view it is very simple: Forensic personnel themselves. This brings up the question of why? Laboratory personnel will see 10 to 20 times more evidence in their career than any other law enforcement personnel. They will know what they can and cannot do with various types of evidence. What better people to collect the evidence. It gives a better type of evidence as well as smaller numbers of items submitted when this is done. However this creates a "Catch-22" situation. If laboratory personnel are not in the lab, then they are not doing casework. Backlog can increase driving down productivity and increasing turnaround time. Both are the arch nemesis laboratory managers and directors.

Biography

James B Crippin first started in forensics in 1977 and is still currently active in the field of forensic science. He worked for the Missouri State Highway Patrol for 11 years, The Colorado Bureau of Investigation for 14 years and created the Western Forensic Law Enforcement Training Center 11 years ago where he still serves as Director. He has also taught over 80 classes in various areas of forensic analysis or Homeland Defense areas as well as presented 25 papers and had 8 articles published in professional journals. In his career he has trained several thousand students from almost every US Federal LE agency as well as many state/local agencies and military as well as many countries overseas.

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