

TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
Forensic Services Division

Violent Crime Response Team Standard Operating Procedures
Comparison Photography



10. VCRT Procedures

10.34 Comparison Photography

10.34.1 Scope

Comparison photography will be used for comparison by a forensic scientist to make an identification or elimination. This photography is most commonly done before attempting a latent lift or collection of impression evidence. These photographs are then made available to a forensic scientist for further analysis in the laboratory.

This procedure differs from overall or documentation photography of a crime scene. See section VCRT 2.5 for additional information.

10.34.2 Definitions

Refer to VCRT 11.0 Definitions and Abbreviations

10.34.3 Chemicals and Reagents

None

10.34.4 Equipment and Supplies

Camera Equipment
Film or Digital Media
Ruler
Measuring Tape
Tripod
Light Source

10.34.5 Procedure

Photograph Evidence

Items of evidence will be photographed using a RAW format and/or suitable high quality resolution (e.g., TIF). Whenever possible, the camera should be mounted to a sturdy tripod to prevent excess movement. To record proper detail, place the camera close to the subject and adjust the size of the image to fill the viewfinder. The image plane should be centered over and parallel to the subject being photographed. A photograph is then made, evaluated and adjustments are made as necessary.

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10.34.5.1 A ruler shall be present in the photograph and at the same plane as the evidence being photographed (NOTE: The ruler printed on the marker number is not suitable to scale the final image to 1:1.)

10.34.5.2 Each photograph shall have the following information included in the frame:

- Initials of the person making the photograph
- Marker number or evidence identifier
- Orientation where appropriate

10.34.5.3 No photographs shall be deleted. See section VCRT 2.5 for more information.

The use of an external light source can aid the photographer in capturing the fine detail needed by the forensic scientist in the comparison process. It is advisable that the photographer use the light source from several different angles when photographing impression evidence.

Photographing Evidence that extends past the edges of the camera frame

At times, it may become necessary for a series of overlapping frames be taken to capture the whole piece of evidence. This is most commonly found with tire tracks from a vehicle that can extend over several feet. In this case, a steel tape measure can be placed next to the track and run the length of the track. This steel tape measure will be used by the forensic scientist to orient the individual photographs. Special attention should be taken not to move the steel tape measure once photography has begun. A smaller ruler will be also included in each frame and moved along the length of the area being recorded. This scale will be used by the forensic scientist to calibrate the image to scale.