

Importance of Paint Trace Evidence

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Paint

Importance of Paint Trace Evidence

Paint trace evidence can be found at many crime scenes, but is most commonly found in vehicle incidents and burglary cases (Saferstein, 2009). Vehicles often leave paint smears and chips upon impact, and burglary tools can have paint smears from contact with painted surfaces during the burglary. Paint is especially important in hit-and-run cases. Paint smears and chips can be compared to a suspect's vehicle to determine if the vehicle was involved in the incident. Paint chips can be matched to missing paint on a vehicle by fitting the chips to the missing section of paint like puzzle pieces. Paint smears from burglary tools can be used to determine which tools were used in the crime (Saferstein, 2009). Combined with other evidence, such as tool marks, forensic scientists can identify specific tools used in a burglary.

Collection and Preservation

The evidence collector must be very cautious when collecting paint chips. Paint chips are

fragile and break easily. Various collection methods exist for different items. Loose paint chips can be collected using tweezers or a piece of paper (Saferstein, 2009). Tweezers should be used carefully to avoid damage to the paint chips. The collected chips should be placed on a sheet of paper. The paper is then carefully folded and placed in an evidence envelope. Collection paper can be used like a dustpan to carefully scoop up paint chips before being folded and placed in an evidence envelope. Paint chips should never be placed directly in an envelope ("Evidence collection," 1993). Envelopes easily come open at sealed points or contain cracks in the seals and corners which could allow small paint chips to be lost or contaminated. T...

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