



## Incident Photography

By Mike Legeros



## Who are the Photographers?

- Thomas Babb (freelance)
- Jeff Harkey (FireNews)
- Mike Legeros
- Carter Rabil (freelance)
- Chad Simon
- Lee Wilson
- Greg Wiggs (Falls FD)
- and others.



## Basic Steps

1. Respond.
2. Take pictures.
3. Process photos.
4. Distribute photos.
5. Manage copies of photos.



## Step #1 - Responding

- Obey traffic laws.
- Accept the adrenaline rush.
- There's always another one.
- There's still plenty to shoot after the fire is controlled.



## Responding



- There's still plenty to shoot after the fire is controlled.



*Rolesville House Fires, 8/07*

## Step #2 – Taking Pictures

- What to Shoot
- How to Behave
- Legal Issues
- Policy Issues
- Film or Digital?
- Camera Settings
- Night Photography



## Priorities on Scene

1. Stay safe.
2. Perform your duties (if a responder).
3. Do not hinder responders.
4. Take pictures.



## What to Shoot

- Action.
- People performing the actions.
- Close ups of people, including responders and spectators.
- Scene from all sides, and different angles.



## What Not to Shoot

- Anything that induces negative reactions from responders, spectators, or victims.
- Such as:
  - Standing over a victim and taking a picture.
  - Placing camera in the face of an exhausted, recuperating responder.



## Your Behavior

- The reaction of responders and authorities to photographers at incidents varies based on:
  - Branding of photographer
  - Demeanor of photographer
  - Proximity to incident
  - Time on scene / number of pictures taken.



## Legal Issues

- Disclaimer: Presenter is not a lawyer, nor plays one on television.
- Public photography is not a crime.
- Trespassing to take photographs is a crime.
- Using photographs can be a crime.



## Policy Issues

- Check your agency's guidelines regarding:
- Taking photos while on duty.
  - Distributing photos taken while on duty.
  - Using photos taken while on duty.



## Film or Digital?

- Presenter shoots exclusively digital.
- Faster, cheaper.
- For his purposes, same quality.
- Formerly used point-and-shoot digital (Fuji).
- Presently uses digital SLR (Canon).
- Has UV filters on all lens.



## Camera Settings

- Picture quality
- Picture mode
- Aperture
- Exposure
- ISO speed
- White balance
- Focus mode
- Metering mode



## Camera Settings

- Picture quality

	Higher Quality	Lower Quality
Size of Picture Files	Larger	Smaller
Number of Pictures Stored in Camera or Memory Card	Less	More
Ease of Sending Files as E-Mail or Posting on Web Pages	Harder	Easier
Quality of Printed Enlargements	Better	Worse



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## Camera Settings

- Picture mode
- ISO speed



## Camera Settings

- Picture mode      Try **Program Shift (P)** instead of **Auto**
- ISO speed          Increase for low light and night photography



## Using Your Flash

- Flash during daylight will help brighten shadows.
- Flash during daylight may reflect on reflective surfaces.
- Flash at night will reflect on reflect surfaces.
- Flash at night may illuminate smoke.
- Flash at night will help freeze action.



## Flash / No Flash



Wake Forest Live Burn, 08/06

Program Shift Mode – ISO Speed 100 (!)

## Night Photography

- Use higher or highest possible **ISO setting**.
- Hold camera as **steady as possible**, against face, or with tripod, or on surface and even with timer or remote release.
- Use **flash carefully**, as it will expose reflect surfaces, may also illuminate smoke.
- Focus/meter on **darker areas**, so camera lets in more light.



## Metering



Problem:

Camera captures fire and little else.

## Metering



Problem:

Camera captures fire and little else.

Cause:

Camera aimed at bright spot, and adjust to be less sensitive to light.

## Metering



Problem:

Camera captures fire and little else.

Cause:

Camera aimed at bright spot, and adjust to be less sensitive to light.

Solution:

Camera aimed at darker spot, and adjust to be more sensitive to light.

## Metering



## Metering



Raleigh Apartment Fire, 09/07  
Program Shift Mode  
ISO Speed 1600

## Step #3 - Processing

- Brightness
- Crop
- Color
- Contrast
- Rotate
- Sharpen
- etc.



Cary Gas Leak, 10/07

## Processing Programs

- Adobe PhotoShop
- Adobe PhotoShop Elements
- Google Picasa
- Macromedia Fireworks
- Microsoft Photo Editor
- Microsoft Picture Manager
- etc.



## Processing – Blurring



## Processing – Blurring



## Processing – Cropping



*Raleigh Apartment Fire, 09/07  
Program Shift Mode  
ISO Speed 1600*

## More Processing

- Auto-leveling – Improve brightness and contrast.
- Sharpening – Reduce fuzziness.
- Straightening – Slightly rotate to correct camera tilt.
- Create low-resolution versions for distribution – Use software such as PhotoShop Elements to automate process.



## Step #4 – Distributing Your Photos

- Physical locations, e.g. firehouse bulletin board.
- Private electronic communication, e.g. e-mail.
- Private web sites, e.g. internal department web pages.
- Public web sites, including:
  - Official department site.
  - Personal web site.
  - Photo sites, such as flickr.com.



## What to Post

Good:

- Anything that is not bad.

Bad:

- Gore
- Victim identities (faces without blurring, etc.)
- Things embarrassing responders
- Things misunderstood by the public.



## Step #5 – Managing Your Photos

- Store photos in a central location.
- Create regular back-up copies.
- Name folders and files wisely.
- Prune photos as needed.
- Record details as needed.



## Naming Folders and Files

- Include date and description:

Good: 2007 new year's day house fire

Better: 2007 Jan 01 house fire

Best: 2007-01-01 house fire

- Use software to rename multiple files and folders, such as **Flash Renamer**.



## Creating Back Up Copies

- Media choices:
  - CD
  - DVD
  - Hard drive
  - Magnetic tape
- Manual copying.
- Automated copying.
- Web site solutions.



## Conclusion - Top Tips

- Get there safely and quickly.
- Be aware of surroundings.
- Higher ISO for low or no light.
- Hold steady for low or no light.
- Avoid victim photos.
- Don't make responders look bad.
- Manage photo files effectively.



**The End**

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