

Crime Scene Investigation



EVIDENCE DESK FORMS THE HEART OF CSI ADELAIDE

SAPOL CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATORS USE PANASONIC TOUGHBOOK TO UPLOAD FORENSIC EVIDENCE IN THE FIELD

The changes include a rollout of technology, a full systems upgrade, the creation of a single control point, called the Evidence Desk, and the relocation of where crime scene investigators are based in the metropolitan area.



South Australia Police (SAPOL) are changing the way they handle forensic evidence across Adelaide.

The changes are part of a wider operational review of business practices, workloads, and studies undertaken over the last five years, and follow consultation with the union, employees and outside agencies such as Forensic Science SA (FSSA).

Crime scene investigators are working with Panasonic Toughbook CF-19s, a robust computer that allows them direct access to the Forensic Register system uploading notes, and photographs of evidence such as fingerprints directly from a scene.

The Toughbooks were first used by SAPOL crime scene experts across South Australia's Pinery fire ground to process more than 270 crime scenes from the field. The Mid North inferno claimed two lives, burnt out more than 80,000ha of bush and farmland and destroyed more than 90 homes, as well as hundreds of other structures.

SAPOL has provided 48 of the Panasonic Toughbooks – which are water, dust and drop-proof - to its crime scene experts after a successful trial of their use in South Coast and Elizabeth Local Service Areas.

"On the first day after the fire, Friday, we did crime scene processing the old way and went to 49 scenes, but didn't complete any of the data entry." Then, between Saturday and Sunday we did 146, with all the data uploaded and cross-referenced to other SAPOL information to ensure that all scenes were attended."

"In essence we estimate these saved at least a week of work time in relation to the Pinery fires, as well as ensuring a more rapid response to the community."

Assistant Commissioner Philip Newitt noted that in some cases, the community had the potential distress of repeated visits by officials to their properties to conduct assessments, but this technology has all but eliminated that problem.

"It will also mean that insurance claims can be expedited," he said.

The widespread rollout is expected to have similar timesaving impacts – for instance fingerprints can be uploaded direct to the Forensic Register from the scene, potentially locating matches within hours.

SA principal Forensic Scientist Nicol Sly said the changes would streamline evidence coming through the department as they would work and liaise with the Desk and know about all the exhibits in a case rather than speaking to several different parties.

Detective Superintendent Yvette Clark, Officer in Charge Forensic Services Branch, said at the heart of the changes was the Forensic Evidence Desk, where items would be brought for assessment before transferred to FSSA.

"Until now, individual investigators have submitted material to FSSA, but now experienced crime scene experts will be providing analysis and expert advice in relation to the forensic evidence gathered," she said.

"This will ensure that only appropriate forensic material is provided to FSSA - this kind of crime scene work is not like TV and it is vital that we use the expertise we have within SAPOL to ensure the best possible outcomes for the community."

Stuart Buxton, Senior Product Manager, Toughbook, Panasonic, said: "We are proud to support the vital work of SAPOL in providing a rapid and efficient response to the needs of the South Australian community. The rugged reliability and connectivity Toughbook can provide in a range of challenging environments has seen it taken up by the emergency services sector worldwide, from police, to fire services and ambulance paramedics.

The change in technology from a highly paper-driven process meant days, if not weeks, was saved in processing information, real-time monitoring and through fewer delays caused by confusion over rural locations.

TOUGHBOOK

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