**Forensic Scientist as a Career**

Forensic science is a special branch of crime scene investigation that utilizes scientific principles to support, negate, or author theories surrounding the evidence discovered at the scene of a crime. Forensic scientists analyze evidence gathered or received from crime scenes in order to develop plausible hypothesizes which led up to the crime. This article will attempt to highlight some important elements when considering a forensic science career, such as, subdivisions of forensic science, employment industries for forensic science and annual median wage, and the skills required to become a forensic scientist.

**Subdivisions of Forensic Science**

Forensic science encompasses a broad spectrum of subdivisions in order to provide answers to questions of interest for our legal system. Due to the copious amount of subdivisions this post will focus on forensics relating to criminal justice. These concentrations include are, but not limited to:

***Criminalistics***

This subdivision focuses its effort to answer questions relating to evidence gathered and received from a crime scene. This would include: biological evidence (, DNA), trace evidence (fingerprints), impression evidence (footwear/tire tracks), ballistics (firearms), controlled or regulated substances (legal/illegal drugs), or any other evidences connected to crime scene investigation. These evidences are normally processed in a laboratory.

***Computational***

Computational forensics allows specialists in this field to accurately assess data using computer software through the development of algorithms to assist forensic examination.

***Digital***

Similar to the computational subdivision, digital forensics provides our legal system with a way to recover data from electronic or digital devices.

***Anthropology***

Forensic anthropology offers credit to our legal system through identification of human skeletal remains when discovered.

***DNA Analysis***

The legal system’s ability to collect DNA has been crucial in identifying the father and mother via paternal/maternal testing. Forensic DNA analysis has been crucial in providing supporting evidence when law enforcement seeks to discover the criminals of rape victims.

***Psychology***

Forensic psychology is specialist attempt to understand the cognitive, emotional, and physical behaviors of suspects and criminals using forensic methods. These individuals also determine whether or not a person is competent enough to represent himself/herself in court.

***Toxicology***

This subdivision focuses on drugs and poisons, and how they affect the human body.

Each division has a different purpose, but they all work together to analyze evidence from a crime scene. The fingerprint analysts will determine which people may have been in a certain area so the firearm identifiers can figure out who may have shot a gun used in a murder. There are plenty of other examples of this chain of events, but it is important to note the interconnectedness amongst the various careers in forensic science. If you decide to find employment in this field, you will need to work with a team of different people to determine what happened in a crime.

**Employment Offices for Forensic Scientists**

Most forensic scientists work in crime labs in a section of a law enforcement office. However, some of these individuals end up working in government offices or law firms to help specific people solve specific crimes. The money you make as a forensic scientist may be partially determined by the industry you work in, so it is important to explore different employment opportunities as they come up. Listed below are some of the most popular industries for forensic science technicians to work in, along with a look at what employees make in these industries:1

* Local Government: Median Income: $54,990
* State Government: Median Income: $54,550
* Psychiatric and Substance Abuse Hospitals: Median Income: $67,310
* Federal Executive Branch (OES Designation): Median Income: $95,240
* Architectural, Engineering, and Related Services: Median Income: $62,710

There are many other factors that will play a role in determining your annual income as a forensic scientist, but it is nice to know what your options may lead to in the end. That may make you explore an employment place that you did not think of in the past.

**How to Become a Forensic Scientist2**

When considering the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to become a forensic scientist the Bureau of Labor Statics (BLS) breaks this down into three important categories: Education, Important Qualities, and Training.

***Education***

Educational requirements forensics scientists need to earn divaricates by employer. Prospects who want to work in crime labs must acquire a bachelor’s degree, however rural agencies at times will hire applicants with a high school diploma. These crime scene investigators also endure rigorous training, on-the-job as they investigate crime scenes and perform lab work.

Crime scene investigators are hired police officers who have been admitted to the police academy by meeting the academy’s educational requirements. Non-uniform applicants however, should obtain a four year degree either in forensic science or a natural science. A natural science or forensic science degree will allow technicians to work in crime laboratories in subdivisions such as biology and chemistry.

***Important Qualities***

The BSL informs prospective technicians of important qualities such as: composure, critical-thinking skills, detail oriented, problem-solving skills, communication skills, and writing skills.

Forensic scientists experience some pretty gruesome or horrific crimes scenes, thus it is good for these individuals to keep their composure, have maturity, while assessing a crime scene. Critical-thinking and problem-solving skills symbiotically work together when assessing a crime scene, or the evidence being reviewed in a lab. These skills allow a person to critically think while simultaneously looking for solutions to the problems these crimes spawn.

Detailed oriented persons will be able to organize and recognize information that is vital for the case. In conjunction with being detailed oriented, communication skills allows a person to either orally or draft a written report explaining the details of their findings.

***Training***

Forensic science is similar to any other agency, extensive on-the-job experience is required by these agencies to work on cases independently. In light of this, newly hired technicians are provided with mentors who teach them proper procedures and methods when collecting evidence and documenting evidence.

These three fundamentals (education, important qualities, and proper and extensive training) to become a forensic scientists provide the prospective technician with the appropriate skills to become and efficient and effective crime scene investigator.

If you have a true passion for science and crime scene investigation, forensic science could be the perfect career path for you. This is not a career for everyone, mainly because it involves a heavy amount of lab work and tedious techniques. If that sounds like an enjoyable experience for you though, you’ll fit in just fine as a forensic scientist.

**References**

1. United States Department of Labor, “Citing Websites.” *Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2011* . Reviewed February 1, 2013. U.S. Federal Government, U.S. Department of Justice. http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes194092.htm
2. United States Department of Labor, “Citing Websites.” *How to Become a Forensic Science Technician*. Reviewed January 29th, 2013. U.S. Federal Government, U.S. Department of Justice. http://www.bls.gov/ooh/life-physical-and-social-science/forensic-science-technicians.htm#tab-4