

Job Ad Analysis: Union County Sheriff's Office, Crime Scene Investigator – Digital Forensics

Writing Assignment One

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Abstract

This essay analyzes a job advertisement for a Crime Scene Investigator specializing in Digital Forensics position with the Union County Sheriff's Office, a moderate suburb of Charlotte, North Carolina. It highlights the essential duality of technical expertise and interpersonal soft skills required for this position. The role involves traditional Crime Scene Investigator functions- collecting processing and documenting physical evidence, while also requiring cross-training in digital forensics to handle the evolving landscape of evidence, ultimately demonstrating the critical role the position plays in the criminal justice system and citizens of Union County, North Carolina.

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A crime scene investigator is a crucial aspect in the criminal justice process, as it provides objective collection and analysis of physical and digital evidence. Crime scene investigators are the meticulous detectives who transform a chaotic scene into a factual record of events through careful collection and analysis of evidence. While often sensationalized on television, the reality of their work involves a disciplined, scientific approach to document, process, and preserve physical and digital evidence. The role of crime scene investigator is vital in determining the truth behind a crime, identifying suspects, building a strong case, and ultimately helping to secure justice for victims.

The Crime Scene Investigator position with the Union County Sheriff's Office would be considered a local government job, serving the public citizens of Union County, in order to document and collect evidence to reconstruct the events of a crime, and ultimately serves the purpose in helping to serve the process of justice for its citizens. The main responsibilities for the job include "collection, processing, documenting, analysis, preservation, and disposition of crime scene evidence and other types of property." This includes "maintaining detailed records of evidence in accordance with county, state, and federal rules/regulations." (*Crime Scene Investigator - Digital Forensics*, 2025) The more in-depth job responsibilities for this position include: collecting and processing fingerprints, using alternate light sources to conduct searches at crime scenes, recreate crime scenes to interpret blood splatter, perform various scientific tests, photograph, videos, and sketches crime scenes and evidence collected, using software to enhance or uncover evidence, writing detailed reports and testifies in court proceedings.

The skills required to serve the role read as: “initiative and independent judgement” along with “exercising tact, courtesy, and firmness in frequent contact with the public.” (*Crime Scene Investigator - Digital Forensics*, 2025) My interpretation of initiative and independent judgement equate to strong problem-solving, decision-making, and being self-motivated. Tact, courtesy, and firmness mean the ability to navigate difficult situations and build positive relationships while still achieving professional objectives. Being able to communicate sensitive information involves discretion and emotional intelligence while being honest and direct. The ability to be assertive and principled, while enforcing rules without being aggressive or overbearing. This aligns with Hannah Henry’s position in that “soft skills include communications, listening, and emotional perceptivity, such as empathy and sympathy...and are not skills that are learned in a short period of time, instead, they are acquired, tuned, and even perfected throughout experiences and time.” (Henry, n.d.) The skills that are needed yet not explicitly stated include adaptability by “remaining on standby, responding to crime scenes,” organization by “maintaining an orderly crime lab,” and mathematical and spatial reasoning for “measuring and documenting exact dimensions of crime scenes using various techniques.” (*Crime Scene Investigator - Digital Forensics*, 2025)

The minimum qualifications for the position include an Associate’s Degree, however Bachelor’s Degree is preferred in Criminal Justice or Criminal/Forensic Sciences or related field and one year of experience in Crime Scene, or acceptable combination of education and experience. And although this job advertisement does not specify verbatim which hard or soft skills are required for this position, just as Harris and Clayton stated, “Many employers are reporting that their priority in applicants is personality, drive and passion and that they can address any technical deficiencies they may exhibit post recruitment.” (Harris & Clayton, 2018)

This is further proven by the job advertisement saying that person hired for the position “must complete forty-eight hours of Crime Scene Certification Board approved instruction in crime scene related courses within one year of employment.” (*Crime Scene Investigator - Digital Forensics*, 2025) This reiterates that hard skills can be taught, and that in a lot of ways, soft skills may be more crucial.

In addition to the traditional skills needed for the Crime Scene Investigator mentioned above, this position for Crime Scene Investigator would have the requirement of dual function to cross train and obtain certifications in Digital Forensics. This would add the responsibilities of conducting digital forensics examinations on a variety of digital devices, preservation of digital evidence and recovering deleted, erased, or hidden digital evidence, assisting detectives and personnel by providing expertise, assisting field investigations, prepares diagrams and reports for court presentations, providing testimony in court, and qualifying as an expert witness in digital forensics.

Union County is located in the south-central Piedmont region of North Carolina. It is considered part of the Charlotte metropolitan area and is “one of the fastest-growing counties in North Carolina.” (uscountymaps, 2024) The county is seemingly a blend of rural and suburban lifestyles, with deep roots agriculturally, along with great investment to the Aerospace Industry, making up the “Largest Geographic Aerospace Cluster in North Carolina.” (*Union County North Carolina, Plant Your Future*, n.d.) With a population around 270,000, although not a huge city nor a small town, it combines the convenience of urban living, with the lower cost of living with a more relaxed pace of life with a strong sense of community. (*Union County North Carolina, Plant Your Future*, n.d.)

This job advertisement aligns perfectly with my skill set. First, I would fulfil the education requirements, as I will have a Bachelor's Degree with a major in Cybersecurity and minor in Criminal Justice. This also would be conducive to the dual functions of cross training in Digital Forensics, as I have taken many courses that would contribute to the position such as: Incident Response & Computer Forensics, Cyber Law, Cybercriminology: Foundations, The Criminal Justice System, Introduction to Criminology, Crime and Computer Applications, Law and Digital Forensics, and Digital Forensics. This paired with the soft skills I have acquired and attuned throughout life, such as communication, analytical and critical thinking, problem solving, perseverance, and resilience, I feel like there is a strong possibility that I would be a great candidate for this position.

In conclusion, the role of crime scene investigator is a demanding yet essential component of the criminal justice system. As demonstrated by the responsibilities of the Union County Sheriff's Office position, these professionals require a unique blend of technical expertise and soft skills like meticulous attention to detail and sound independent judgement to transform chaotic crime scenes into objective, factual records. This position is vital in upholding public safety, and ensuring that the complex, painstaking process of evidence collection culminates securing justice for victims and the community.

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