



Crime Scene Unit FAQs

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1. General minimum educational requirements for your section:

- A Bachelor's degree in a related field, such as Forensic Science, any natural science, or Criminal Justice.

2. What advice would you offer someone considering this career path?

- If possible, complete an internship or ride along program with a crime scene unit to understand what is done on a day-to-day basis and what crime scenarios are dealt with by CSIs (Crime Scene Investigators).
- Don't trust what you see on TV.

3. Besides a degree(s), what other things does HFSC look for in future CSIs in this section?

- Good work ethic
- The drive to want to learn more and understand various aspects of the field.
- The physical ability to endure the job.
- The ability to emotionally process crime scenes in a productive manner.
- Solid communication skills
- Enough confidence that you can do a good job but understanding the field is ever evolving, so you won't always know everything.

4. What is a typical day/week like for a CSI in this section?

- A typical work week is four 10-hour shifts (40 hours over 4 days) and three days off. Our day shift hours are 5 am–3 pm, evening shift is 1 pm–11 pm, and night shift is 9 pm–7 am. Both evening shift and night shift get shift differential for working evening/night hours.

5. Is it typical to work overtime? How often?

- It can be expected to work overtime. How often depends on crime rates and trends. If there's a scene that gets called in later in the shift, there's a potential for working overtime to complete scene processing and submitting the evidence from the scene. For example, night shift starts at 9pm, but if a crime scene gets called in around 8:30 pm, the evening shift works the crime scene. Depending on the complexity of the crime and the crime scene, it may take past 11 pm to completely and thoroughly process the crime scene.

6. How often do CSIs in this section appear in court to testify?

- This is dependent on how quickly charges are developed and arrests are made in a case, how quickly evidence is analyzed by the lab, but also how quickly the courts are taking cases to trial. For example, a CSI has been working for about 3 years with HFSC as of March 2024, and even though the CSI has been subpoenaed to testify in cases, she has yet to testify. In 2024, she is mainly receiving subpoenas for cases from 2021 and 2022.

7. How important is communication in the daily function of your job?

- Communication is very important in the daily function of a CSI job. Not only do we communicate through written reports for the stakeholders, we also communicate with one another as we work in squads/teams to process scenes and vehicles. We work together as a unit to support one another.

8. In your opinion, what do you think is the most challenging part of your occupation?

- The most challenging part of the occupation would be learning to compartmentalize the scenes we process and the things we witness in crime scene work. Understanding mental health and how you, as an individual, process things in the field are super important to keep a healthy work-life balance and solid mental health.

9. What advancement opportunities are available in your line of work?

- In crime scene, there are several opportunities available. Depending on the individual and their educational background, they can move from crime scene into the forensic laboratory sections. Immediately within crime scene, there are opportunities to become a supervisor in crime scene or possibly even a director of a crime scene unit/forensic division.

10. What is a common misconception people have about your job?

- A common misconception is people assume crime scene work is just like what is seen on television shows, like *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*. At HFSC, CSIs don't directly communicate with laboratory analysts. We don't do investigations like detectives and investigators do (that's usually our stakeholder – for example, homicide detectives for HPD), and we rarely know the details of the case after completing our work of processing the crime scene, vehicle, evidence etc.

11. How is the work-life balance for a CSI in this section?

- Work-life balance is important to maintain as a CSI because everyone will eventually need a break. Going to crime scenes and seeing the things we see day in and day out can take a toll on any person who is in this field. Ensuring you have a healthy work-life balance helps you continue to love your career and continue to be the best version of yourself for work and for your family and friends at home.