

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Today's popular television shows depict amazing but fictional crime scene forensics work. In real life, however, there are equally astounding scientific and technical advances in crime prevention and investigation. The feature articles in this issue of the *NIJ Journal* highlight several scientific breakthroughs to solve crime and to protect the public and law enforcement personnel.

"Without a Trace? Advances in Detecting Trace Evidence" details four cutting-edge methods of extracting information from microscopic particles at a crime scene. These include matching fragments of glass, analyzing a minute layer of chemical residue without destroying the entire sample, and illuminating bodily fluids in broad daylight.

"DNA Evidence: What Law Enforcement Officers Should Know" explains the basics of DNA sample collection and notes some procedures that can enhance the usefulness of such evidence. "CCTV: Constant Cameras Track Violators" provides an overview of the use of closed circuit cameras to monitor public areas. And, "NIJ's Bullet-Resistant Vest Standard Reaches Milestone" celebrates the success of a manufacturing protocol that has saved the lives of thousands of law enforcement personnel.

This issue's "Research At-A-Glance" section contains two articles relating to alcohol and crime. A team of researchers looked into the effect on crime rates of alcohol control policies such as excise taxes and higher legal drinking ages, and found no discernible improvements (at least none yet). Another researcher took a close look at the relationship between binge drinking and crime in a Native American population, the Northern Plains Tribes. Also in this section is a discussion of how mapping technology can help probation and parole officers, and the results of a survey on community policing.

As technology becomes an increasingly important element of every aspect of twenty-first century life, its use by those engaged in criminal activity will undoubtedly increase as well. The Department of Justice remains committed to ensuring that the latest technological advances will always be in the arsenal of those administering criminal justice.



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