

How it works

Photograph Forensic Items Using the Forensic Light Box



Even hard to shoot items like this fingerprint are easy to capture in the Forensic Light Box.



Ballistics evidence, perfectly lit.



The Forensic Light Box.

Problem: Forensic photographers face many challenges when photographing evidence. They may lack the necessary tools to shoot high-quality photographs with ease and precision and the results are often less than optimal. One of these challenges is to capture latent prints from highly reflective objects and glass.

Solution: MK Digital Direct from San Diego, California, has designed a forensic photography lighting system that wraps around objects with even and soft (sometimes called flat) illumination. The materials inside the box evenly diffuse lighting over the surface of the objects to eliminate shadows, hot spots, and reflections and create crisp, quality photographs. Careful camera placement allows for the easy capture of images that were previously near impossible to shoot in a traditional forensic photo lab setup. When these images are introduced as evidence, it is apparent that the even, natural illumination obtained with the Forensic Light Box increases the clarity of the image, making each photographed item distinguishable.

How It Works: Professional Forensic Photography in Five Easy Steps

1. Get a compatible digital camera: Any camera that has a full manual mode, the ability to attach a close-up lens (you'll have to buy the lens too), and a custom white balance setting will work.
2. Adjust your digital camera settings: A step-by-step guide is provided that teaches you how to set up your camera (white balance, shutter speed, ISO, etc.) and how to properly shoot photos.
3. Turn on the MK Forensic Photography Lighting System: Simply flip a switch.
4. Position your forensic items inside the system: As easy as it sounds.
5. Point your camera and shoot: Edit the photos on your computer only when needed.

MK Digital Direct originally created a similar photographic light box for the jewelry industry over 12 years ago. The original system was intended to overcome the difficulty of photographing rings, pearls, and glassware without reflections and hot spots. When Stan Goldberg, sales manager of the Law Enforcement Division at Hunt's Photo & Video of Melrose, MA, thought of creating a photographic solution for the forensic industry, he turned to MK Digital to develop what is now known as the Forensic Light Box.

Goldberg, who has 50 years of experience providing photographic solutions for the law enforcement industry, has already seen the benefits of this quality turnkey photographic solution. It has already been put to use by the Massachusetts State Police, Portland Maine Crime Lab, Boston Police Department, and others during the past 16 months. Recently, one of Stan's customers had to photograph a latent print from a doorknob—usually a very difficult task. The customer had no problem doing so with the MK Forensic Light Box.

The Forensic Light Box is currently available in two sizes. The smaller one (PhotoBox EX) features an inside shooting area of 10" x 13" x 8", while the larger one (PhotoBox PLUS 1419 EX) is 14.5" x 19.75" x 13". Both systems feature florescent natural daylight at 6,500° Kelvin, four sides of illumination (left, right, back, and bottom), and two openings for shooting (top and front). The smaller unit is best for photographing handguns and smaller items, while the larger unit is great for photographing multiple items at one time or larger items. Additionally, both systems may be positioned vertically to use the system's length as its height, allowing one to fit and photograph taller items—such as wine bottles.

MK's latest product innovation introduced at the annual IAI International Conference in Spokane, Washington, is the ability to include built-in UV LED lights (320nm, with independent control switch) in the inside top-front corner of the lighting system. This additional feature allows a forensic team to correctly identify and capture more specific details from the evidence.

For more information, visit www.forensiclightbox.com.