

## SOFTWARE SPOTLIGHT

# The CAD Zone Law Enforcement Drawing Software

*If you need to draw a crime scene or an accident diagram, load these apps into your computer.*

## Bob Davis

How many times have you heard the old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words"? Well if there is any truth to that old adage, then an easy-to-use 3D drawing application is easily worth a billion words or more to the average cop. The CAD Zone's latest releases of The Crime Zone and The Crash Zone law enforcement drawing applications (now both at version 7.2) are worth a billion words and more. But I promise to control myself.

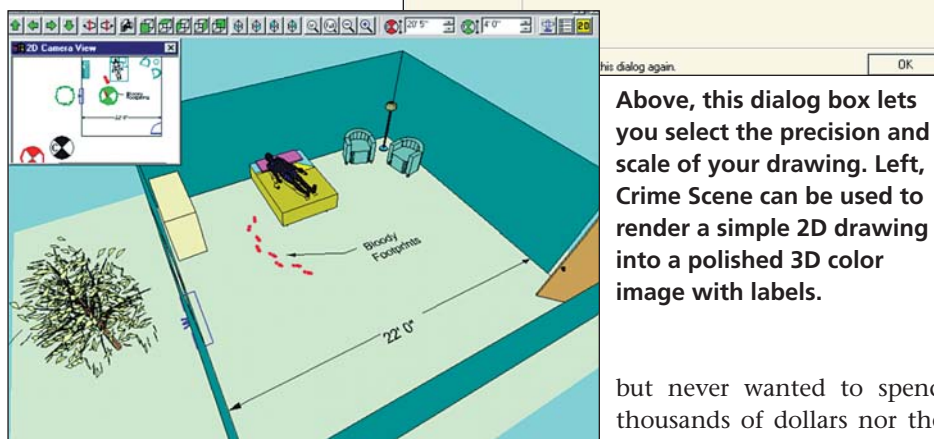
These easy-to-use drawing programs are great for novice users such as street cops, but they also include all the bells and whistles necessary for the work of more seasoned investigators. Crime Zone and Crash Zone are so user friendly that almost any reasonably intelligent cop can be up and running these programs and creating professional crime scene drawings or accident scene diagrams after just a few lessons.

I know what you're thinking. Who has the time or budget for training lessons? Well, the folks at The CAD Zone have thought of that, too.

Beaverton, Ore.-based The CAD Zone has been producing public safety applications for the last decade, and it understands the needs of law enforcement agencies. Believe me, the folks at The CAD Zone can ease your pain of transitioning from pencil and paper to the age of digital magic.

OK, I bet you're asking, "How the heck are they going to do that? I have problems just getting my PC turned on, let alone finding the skill necessary to make 3D drawings."

Let me walk you through it. The CAD Zone ships a supplementary CD with each of these programs that's filled with



Above, this dialog box lets you select the precision and scale of your drawing. Left, Crime Scene can be used to render a simple 2D drawing into a polished 3D color image with labels.

animated instructions and directions and teaches you how to make them work. This is a great tutorial system.

One of the things I've learned since I started teaching is we all learn differently. What works for some, doesn't work for others. But one method that has the most success is repetition. That's the concept behind the tutorial discs that come with these programs. They allow you to play the instructions over and over until you learn how to do it. In addition, these tutorial discs have a great feature that lets you immediately apply your new skills by switching from the training window to application window. Later, if you get stuck, you can just go back to the automated instructor program.

Although I consider myself pretty literate when it comes to running a PC, I've never used a 3D drawing program. I've seen other applications like AutoCAD,

but never wanted to spend thousands of dollars nor the hundreds of hours to become an expert with the program. I was convinced that if I didn't use it constantly I'd quickly lose those skills.

That's what makes Crime Zone and Crash Zone so appealing. If I do forget how to manipulate an object, I can always fall back to the tutorial CD ROM and have my answers in a matter of moments.

In addition to their tutorial discs, both Crime Zone and Crash Zone offer a user-friendly "Start from Scratch" interface. To start working, all you have to do is supply the answers to two questions: the scale that you want to use and the units of measurement that you want to use. The software lets you use measurements ranging from inches to miles at a precision level ranging down to the eighth decimal place of an inch.

Once you set the scale and units to be used, it's time to get to work. All you have to do is select a drag-and-drop interface

tool and start your drawing. For example, the most frequently used tools, the "Easy Builder" and "Easy Lines" tools, let you enter the wall dimensions of your crime scene and pop them into your diagram, to scale. That's right, to scale. All you'll need are those field measurements you carefully recorded at the scene.

So what is the trick to this little digital wizard? It's one of the things cops forget most often: Remember to look up. But in this case it's remember to get the "Z" or vertical coordinate measurements. Without them, you'll never get a rendering and you might as well go back to paper and pencil.

Earlier I mentioned bells and whistles. Crime Zone and Crash Zone have plenty of them. For example, they can import data directly from industry standard electronic or laser measuring equipment. If your department has this equipment, then Crime Zone and Crash Zone can import the raw data and place the points you carefully collected into a new drawing that allows you to manage up to 1,024 layers of information.

For example, when you're out there at

three in the morning documenting the scene where another D.U.I. decided to zig instead of zag, you can take comfort in knowing that Crash Zone will be able to duplicate the exact curve in the roadway using either baseline or triangulation methods. That means that not only will you be able to show both a 2D and 3D representation, you'll also be able to show it from an infinite number of points of view. And later, when you need to collaborate with your local traffic engineer who works with AutoCAD, you can import AutoCAD's .dwg and .dxf files and export Crash Zone files as .dwg and .dxf files.

I've briefly examined some of the basic concepts of the software with crime and crash scene documentation. But don't think for a moment these are the only uses for Crime Zone and Crash Zone. Just off the top of my head, I can see using these applications for tactical planning, site surveys, safe schools analysis, motorcade routing, and Homeland Security planning. Heck, you might want to use them to plan the layout of your new office.

With Crash Zone and Crime Zone software you'll also be ready for your courtroom presentations. The only limits will be your budget and the size of the plotter used to print out your "to scale" diagrams.

When I think back about the countless hours I spent preparing hand-drawn major accident scenes with paper, pen, and a drafting scale, I realize that products like The Crime Zone and its companion The Crash Zone are great time savers that make it easier for cops to create their reports and get back out on the streets. ☉

*A 25-year police veteran and a member of the San Diego Police Department, Bob Davis has extensive experience managing technology for major events. He currently runs the SDPD computer lab.*

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