

NEWS

Information & Insights from **RICK JOHNSON** Private Investigators
& ASSOCIATES OF COLORADO, INC.

1649 Downing Street, Denver, CO 80218-1528 • Office: 303/296-2200 • Fax: 303/296-3038 • Nationwide: 800/530-2300
www.denverpi.com e-mail rja@denverpi.com

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Domestic Relations Investigations

There is no trust more important than the trust that cements a personal relationship. A suspected break in that trust can be devastating. Suspicion, alone, can seriously undermine even a long-standing and previously solid marriage.

A private investigator often is called upon to uncover the facts and circumstances that can convert suspicion into evidence, but the job of a good private investigator is to uncover the facts, wherever they may lead.

Speed v. Caution

A request for help in a domestic matter often requires an immediate and complete response.

But it's important for an investigator and the client to understand that the problem may be one based on poor communication, perhaps even mischief perpetrated by a third party with a grudge.

The personal privacy of both the client and the subject of the investigation must be protected to every extent possible.

That may seem to be an odd consideration when surveillance

In this day of widespread computer use, Email often is used without much thought toward security. A computer hard drive, even floppy disks, can reveal a wealth of information, and files thought to be erased often can be identified and restored.

A paper trail based on receipts and other circumstantial evidence can fuel suspicion, but surveillance almost inevitably is the tool that answers the final question.

Surveillance is both a tactical and a technical option.

It is tactical in the sense that it must be tailored to the circumstances. A suspect arriving at an airport may be met by someone, may rent a car, may take a cab, with a destination unknown in advance to others. A hotel has multiple entrances and exits that must be covered.

If a residential neighborhood is involved, consideration must be given to the type of vehicles used by the investigators conducting surveillance.

It is a technical option in that any photographic or video recording equipment essentially must be invisible to both the subject and bystanders. On the one hand, a suitably equipped surveillance van may be used... on the other, an assignment in a public place may require a camera hidden in a briefcase. We have one that looks

Child Custody Issues: Special Handling Required

An important part of our work is in the coordination of efforts to properly execute out-of-state court orders in child custody matters.

This often entails an effort first to locate the children, followed by the filing of paperwork necessary to the enforcement of an out-of-state order in Colorado, and finally the return of the children to the custodial parent.

This never is a routine process. The emotions of the parties can run high. And always, the impact on the children must be minimized to every extent possible.

An experienced and knowledgeable investigator is a paramount element of a successful domestic investigation.

That element alone can make all the difference

Rick Johnson



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with still and video cameras often is an investigative tool in these matters; but the point is not to embarrass the subject, who may or may not be engaged in extramarital activities, but to make and record observations. It then would be the responsibility of the client to discard the confidentiality of the arrangement.

What We Can Do To Help

People generally are not experts in the practice of deception. Paper records may exist - credit card receipts, telephone bills, bank statements, and the like.

Credit card receipts may identify unusual or unexplained purchases. Telephone bills can identify long distance numbers that don't appear to correspond to normal personal or business use. Withdrawals of cash from ATM machines are identified by locations that may be illuminating.

like an ordinary wristwatch.

More Than Observation

An investigator must do more than merely observe and record the activities of a subject under surveillance.

The investigator must be alert for vehicles that may be used to pick up the subject. License numbers can be traced to the owners. Residential addresses can be traced to identify the owners. Even if a residence is an apartment, it may be possible to identify the owner by other means.

Many domestic assignments involve subjects arriving from out of state, but many others may entail localized work to track a subject's activities during or after work hours, or on short day trips, supposedly business trips, to nearby cities.

The same considerations apply to localized surveillance as apply to out-of-town arrivals.

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