

SURVEILLANCE LOG

PURPOSE

For many reasons, establishing and following a clear set of surveillance protocols during investigations is crucial. For starters, anyone claiming to honor the scientific method in paranormal investigating understands the importance of controls. By “controls,” we mean those precautions taken to contain how data is collected, to limit contamination of that data, and to identify potential false positives and misinterpretations. Unfortunately, the average paranormal investigation is conducted in an environment where it’s difficult to implement controls. For example, despite our best efforts to minimize noise, traffic is passing by outside and people are shouting to each other, or wildlife is calling and weather is happening. Inside the venue, HVAC is turning on and off, and the house infrastructure is periodically waking up with the sound of running water or creaking beams, or the footfalls of occupants are coming and going. It behooves an investigative team to document the events that might later be mistaken as anomalies in the review of audio and video.

Furthermore, the potential for paranormal activity exists anywhere, at any time, while investigators are conducting an investigation. It isn’t necessarily summoned to the room where they’ve set up a vigil, nor should it be expected to manifest on cue because investigators ask for a sign of its presence. In short, it helps to surveil the totality of the investigation for events in real time that may be happening unnoticed by the occupants and investigators. This, of course, can mean capturing paranormal events such as light anomalies, shadow forms, moving objects, or peculiar pet behavior. However, it can also mean documenting commonplace movements and activities that can later be cross-checked. A muffled scream captured on a digital audio recording may in fact be the pushing back of a shower curtain in the bathroom down the hall. That creepy “Yessssss!” that seems to be a direct response to a question might in reality be an investigator’s nylon jacket rustling as she repositions herself on the floor. It may come as a surprise to some that the vast number of EVP presented on-line as “evidence” of paranormal phenomena—that is, the ones that aren’t outright faked—are false positives caused by commonplace noises that were never properly surveilled or documented in real time. (A “false positive” is a result incorrectly indicating that some condition or evidence is present.) These false positives are frequently matrixed as disembodied voices or other anomalous sounds.

Just as multiple audio recording devices stationed in different parts of the room help to corroborate or discount EVP later in the peer review process, a multiple channel DVR surveillance system helps, both, to document the

investigation in a practical way and expand the search for anomalies. And, while the average paranormal investigation cannot always hope for the sorts of controls that a scientific experiment would, establishing fastidious protocols of documentation is the next best method we have. In short, putting controls on ourselves in our methods of documentation is hugely important to any investigation conducted under the scientific method.

Although the attached form is designed for use with DVR surveillance systems, truthfully any paranormal investigation should include some sort of surveillance protocol, even if strictly by the five senses. In fact, whenever you announce to others in the dark of a vigil that you cleared your throat or heard a noise outside, you’re surveilling, and if the digital recorders are “rolling,” then, technically speaking, you’re documenting that surveillance. The same protocols should be followed in a meta-surveillance of the investigation whether or not a DVR surveillance system has been employed: someone should be assigned the job of being aware of the totality of the investigation and its environment, including what’s going on outside the venue. The “Surveillance Log” form can be utilized for this purpose as well.

METHODOLOGY

One or more investigators should be assigned to monitor the DVR channels while other investigators are elsewhere conducting vigils or investigative activities. DVR monitoring should take place in a secure environment. A closed room is preferred as yet another measure of control. However, if the surveillance is set up in a more open space, silence and limited activity are key: after all, the act of monitoring an investigation should not contaminate the investigation with unwanted noises and movements. If two investigators are sharing the duty of monitoring, one should be responsible for announcing surveilled events, while the other should be responsible for entering them into the log.

APPLICATION

After the investigation, the Surveillance Log should be posted or provided as a reference source for the review of audio and video from the investigation. Surveillance Logs do not need to be part of a client report. Instead, an Investigation Activities Log chronicling the components of the investigation and the team’s movements through the venue will be completed and included.

USING THIS FORM

As with other forms provided by PPI, the Surveillance Log can be adapted to your own needs. The attached form, however, is formatted to accommodate a multi-channel DVR system. The form is organized in two parts: basic case information, and a log for real-time

documentation of events. Other than the usual information (date and case ID), users should take care to record accurately the following:

DVR ON/OFF: For the log to work with a DVR surveillance system, the user should set up the DVR in advance with date and time. Documenting the start time of the DVR recording makes it possible to synchronize other devices to that time, which will make it convenient afterward to cross-check with the DVR recording any events that may have been captured by digital recorders and video cameras. Cross-checking makes for reliable determinations in the peer review of the collected data.

ROOMS / ANGLES: The form is pre-formatted to accommodate a 6-channel DVR system, but it can be modified as needed. Channels should be identified by their locations in the venue, including angles and any special targets of interest included. These channels will be referenced by number when events are entered into the log.

INITIALS: Since surveillance duty is handed off to other team members during the investigation, it's important to identify who is "witnessing" events worthy of entering into the log. Any follow-up inquiry, then, can be directed to the right persons. In the event two or more team members are surveilling, use the initials of the team member who announces an event, rather than merely defaulting to the initials of the person holding the pen.

CH# or EXT / INT: Indicate the specific DVR channel where any potentially significant event, such as an activity or an anomaly, is occurring. If noteworthy sounds originate from the interior of the venue, but not on camera, identify them as "INT." If noteworthy events occur outside the venue, identify them as "EXT."

TIMESTAMP: If using a DVR surveillance system to monitor the investigation, use the timestamp from the DVR. Before the investigation begins, the DVR, handheld video cameras, still image cameras, digital recording devices, data loggers, and other devices for which timestamps are possible, should be synchronized. If a DVR surveillance system is not used, however, then record the time stamp from the most convenient synchronized device available. In most cases, a smartphone's clock is auto-synced and reliable enough for this purpose.

Real-time timestamps are enormously important for the peer review process of the investigation. Too

many novice investigators rely on the time cues of their recordings instead of timestamps. A time cue will only indicate how far into the recording an event occurs, but a timestamp will record in actual AM/PM time when an event happens. Synchronized devices and use of real-time timestamps is the most reliable and simplest way for team members to cross-reference one another's findings. (Investigators may calculate real-time timestamps with the aid of recording cues, but even in this case synchronicity among devices is still a necessity.)

PPI prefers to use military time (eg., 23:47:11, instead of 11:47 PM), but users are free to choose whatever method they find most comfortable. Regardless, it's crucial to indicate hour, minutes, *and seconds*, as demanded by standards of synchronicity. When you're trying to pinpoint the location of an event in your own recording, a range of sixty seconds is cumbersome and inexact. If using a DVR surveillance system, seconds should already be displayed, but if using another device, make sure it counts the seconds as well as standard digital time: hh:mm:ss.

TYPE OF EVENT: Four general categories of events to choose from are pre-formatted in this form, but users may wish to change these per their own needs. PPI classifies log events as either aural, visual, activity related, or other. "Aural" events—or, sound events—include anything heard inside or outside the venue that is either of interest or which could otherwise lead to a false positive in the data review later on. Even commonplace sounds should be noted as background noises that may potentially be misinterpreted later. "Visual" events include random flashes of light or shadows, shadow forms, light anomalies (such as orbs), apparitions, or other related anomalies. Activities include the coming and going of occupants and team members while the investigation is in progress: if an occupant comes through the front door, for instance; or, if one or more team members leave to investigate an area from which sounds may have been heard. If an event does not fit conveniently into any one of these categories, "Other" is selected.

NOTES: Regardless of the type of event selected, some note of description should be added to the log to detail the event. Here are some typical annotations: team member exits, returns 15 sec.; orb, to upper right; distant barking; helicopter; rain on street; passing car; photo flash; pedestrian; etc.

SURVEILLANCE LOG			
INFO	ROOMS / ANGLES		
CASE:	CH 1	CH 2	CH 3
DATE:			
TIME DVR ON HH:MM:SS	CH 4	CH 5	CH 6
TIME DVR OFF HH:MM:SS			

INITIALS	CH # OR EXT / INT	TIME STAMP	TYPE OF EVENT	NOTES
			AURAL ACTIVITY VISUAL OTHER	
			AURAL ACTIVITY VISUAL OTHER	
			AURAL ACTIVITY VISUAL OTHER	
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INITIALS	CH # OR EXT / INT	TIME STAMP	TYPE OF EVENT		NOTES
			AURAL	ACTIVITY	
			VISUAL	OTHER	
			AURAL	ACTIVITY	
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			AURAL	ACTIVITY	
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