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Department of Justice Spends Hundreds of Thousands to Study Duct Tape

Colonel Mustard, in the library, with... a roll of duct tape? Thanks to a \$2 million grant from the United States Department of Justice, researchers at the University of California, Davis are conducting experiments on this famous multipurpose adhesive in the hope that another tool will be put in the belt of forensic crime scene investigators.



On Wednesday, UC Davis Forensic Science program announced the receipt of three separate grants from the federal government awarded to first, establish a bullet-matching database; second, study the impression made by bullets; and, third and most astonishingly, determine whether torn pieces of duct tape can be matched to the roll from whence it was ripped. The portion of the grant pertaining to duct tape research totals \$150,000 over two years.

According to the UC Davis press release, faculty from the forensic science program and the Department of Statistics will analyze thousands of samples of duct tape used in the commission of various crimes to establish whether or not the pieces can be matched reliably, thus amounting to a form of “fingerprint” that can assist law enforcement in the investigation of crime scenes. Fred Tulleners, director of the graduate program in forensic science explained the goal of the study, “We want to provide some statistics that prove a duct tape tear is unique.”

Duct tape (the origin of the name is uncertain) is a fabric-reinforced, vinyl adhesive developed by Johnson and Johnson in 1942 to water proof the seals on ammunition cases. The tape was used by the military for a variety of purposes including the repair of jeeps and airplanes, earning duct tape the nickname “100 mile per hour tape,” because of its reputed durability in the face of hurricane force winds.

Since its invention during World War II, the tape used been used to fix everything from rear-view mirrors to filters on *Apollo 13*. And now, it seems, tell-tale bits of it used to commit crimes might be used to point the finger at perpetrators.



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