



# The Lab Report

Volume 5, Issue 1

April 2015

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## In This Issue...

In this first issue of 2015, we are providing the reader with articles regarding the following topics: CODIS News (DNA buccal swab collection kit expiration dates, CODIS prelog, collection kit packaging/handling, and information regarding the EasiCollect devices), Federal Grand Jury Rush Requests for controlled substance analysis, the discontinuation of Forensic Document Examination, and our customer feedback driven new DNA report formats! We will also highlight some of our laboratory's ongoing community outreach efforts, updates regarding the new facility, hints on evidence, and current backlog statistics!

For convenience, any links that are embedded in [The Lab Report](#) pdf documents can be accessed simply by clicking on the link! This includes the newest feature in the newsletter - links to laboratory supervisor contact information (see page 10). This feature allows for quick and easy contact with analysts and supervisors with a quick "click" of the mouse!

If you have any questions/concerns regarding the topics related to this issue of [The Lab Report](#), please do not hesitate to contact us (laboratory contact information - pg. 10).

Enjoy!

Amy Weber (Firearm/Toolmark Section Analyst - Editor)

## The Backlog Corner

(\*approximate turnaround times are calculated for routine cases only - RUSH cases not included)

**Biology Unit:** 216 assignments (approx. 6 month turnaround time)

**Physical Sciences Unit:**

**Firearm/Toolmark cases:** 11 assignments (approx. 1 month turnaround time)

**Footwear/Tire cases:** 1 assignment (approx. 1 month turnaround time)

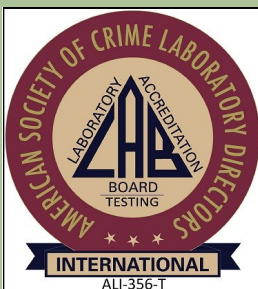
**Latent Fingerprints Section:** 47 assignments (approx. 2.5 month turnaround time)

**Chemistry Unit:**

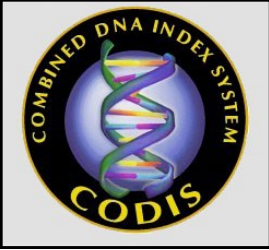
**Controlled Substances:** 903 assignments (approx. 4 month turnaround time)

**Toxicology:** 162 assignments (approx. 3.5 month turnaround time)

**Trace:** 0 assignments (approx. 1 month turnaround time)



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### CODIS News

Thank you to all of our DNA collection agencies for the excellent work you have done with regard to collecting the state's convicted offender DNA samples. See below for a few reminders to ensure proper use of the DNA collection kits:

#### DNA Buccal SWAB Collection Kits

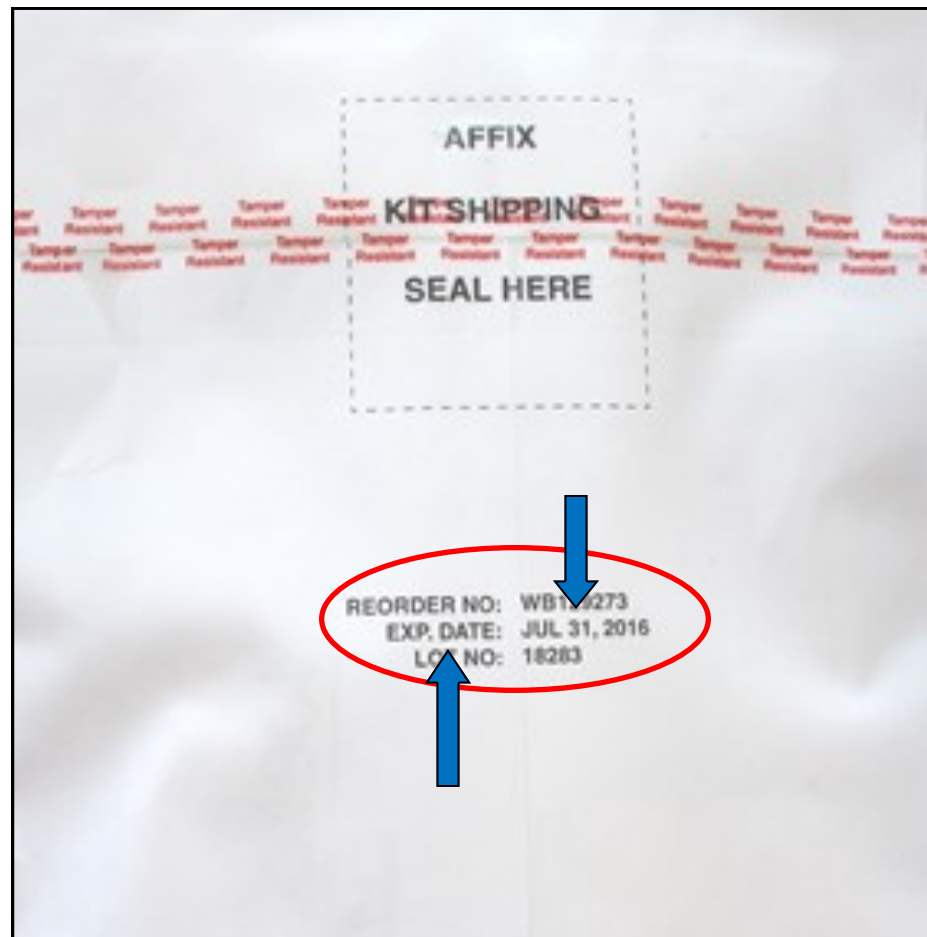
The DNA buccal SWAB collection kits with the q-tip type collector are **expiring July 31, 2015**. Please check your offices and use these kits up before they expire.

It is important to always check the expiration date on the back of the DNA collection kit – if it has expired, the sample will be rejected and you will be asked to re-collect the sample.

CODIS

*Katie Rector (Sup.)*

*Christel Davis*

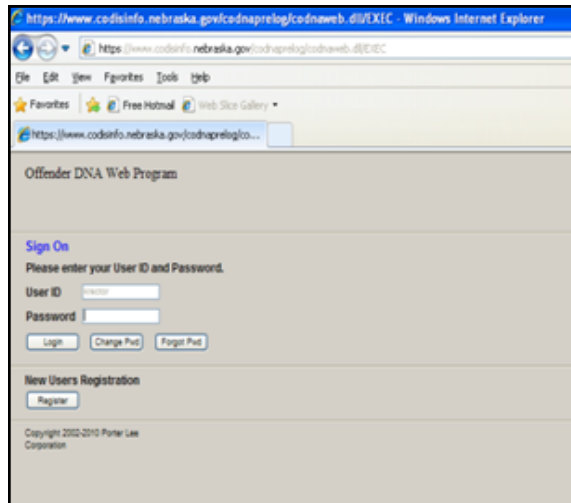


## CODIS News

### CODIS Prelog Option



If you have access to a computer and your NCJIS account, we ask that you please use CODIS Prelog to search for any previously collected sample(s) from the convicted offender, and to submit the offender information electronically. **This will save you time as well as streamline the accessioning process at the laboratory.**



### Helpful Hint – Collection Kit Packaging/Handling

**Please do NOT lick or glue the Sample or Kit envelopes!!** Use the tamper resistant tape provided in the collection kit to seal the envelopes.





## CODIS News

### EasiCollect Device (Blue Plastic Sponge)

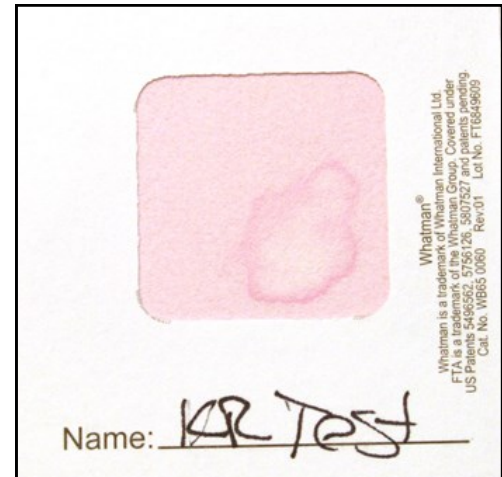
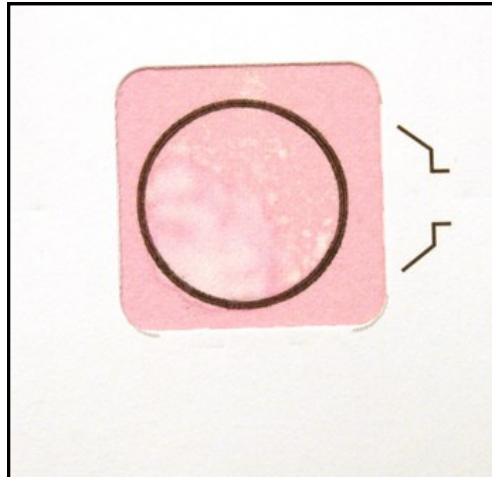
When collecting the offender's DNA sample using the EasiCollect Device (blue plastic sponge) please ensure that there is a color change on the FTA card from pink to white.

Samples have been submitted to the NSP Crime Laboratory (NSPCL) with no color change and, as a result these samples produce little to no DNA. Without an appropriate amount of DNA on the collection card we are unable to produce a DNA profile requiring the need for the submitting officer to re-collect the sample from the offender.

### CODIS

*Katie Rector (Sup.)*

*Christel Davis*



Thank you again for all of your hard work and please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Katie Rector - CODIS State Administrator

(main) 402.471.8950 or [Katherine.Rector@nebraska.gov](mailto:Katherine.Rector@nebraska.gov)

## Controlled Substances Unit: Federal Grand Jury Rush Requests

Due to the backlog of cases in the controlled substances section of the crime laboratory, careful consideration must be given to the prioritization of cases so as to ensure that all submitters receive as timely a service as possible! The NSP Crime Laboratory (NSPCL) serves all of the state, city and county law enforcement agencies in Nebraska, federal task forces, and other state agencies with investigative and enforcement authority. **The controlled substances section of the NSPCL receives approximately 3,000 assignments per calendar year and currently has a backlog of 903 assignments.**

The controlled substances section analysts are responsible not only for analysis of all samples submitted to the laboratory but also for travel to and testimony in court when subpoenaed. **Court testimony is routinely provided in county cases (can be across the state, including frequent trips to Scotts Bluff County) and federal cases (Lincoln, Omaha and out-of-state).**

Because the NSPCL controlled substances section provides services to these varied agencies, the allocation of resources must consider all agencies equally. **Therefore, the NSPCL does not ordinarily rush cases for federal grand jury indictment.** The NSPCL management has conferred with John Higgins of the U.S. Attorney's Office and it was agreed that taking a case out of order solely for the purpose of rushing a case for federal grand jury indictment is typically not needed; indictment can wait for a later grand jury term. **Honoring rush requests for purposes of federal indictment unfairly penalizes state and local cases that are in the backlog queue and are of equal importance. Therefore, federal grand jury cases are worked in the order they are received with all other cases from our submitting agencies**

In order to request that a case be rushed, **NSP form 750B** must be filled out completely with information regarding the reason for the rush request and contact information of the person requesting the rush. Filling out the rush request form does not ensure the case will be rushed, it simply provides the laboratory with the information to properly evaluate the feasibility and necessity of rushing the case.

**Please contact, Celeste Laird (Chemistry Unit Manager), for any additional questions or concerns ([Celeste.Laird@nebraska.gov](mailto:Celeste.Laird@nebraska.gov))**



### Controlled Substances

*Celeste Laird (Mgr.)*

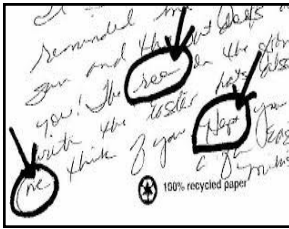
*Vicky Cowan*

*Abbey Dodds*

*Meggan Macomber*

*Jerry Smith*





## Discontinuation of Forensic Document Examination Services

In an attempt to provide the best possible services to our contributing agencies, the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory (NSPCL) constantly evaluates our laboratory analytical services in order to ensure our resources are being applied in the areas deemed most critical and beneficial to our stakeholders. Since 2007, we have been providing forensic document examination services through a contract agreement with a private laboratory as a temporary arrangement with the thought that we may, at some point, reinstate that service in-house.

However, at this time we have determined that re-instating forensic document examinations in-house will not be feasible and continuing to fund a service that we do not foresee offering internally is not the most efficient use of our resources. **Therefore, as of April 30, 2015, we will no longer be facilitating forensic document examination services through our crime laboratory.** New forensic document examination cases submitted to the laboratory after April 30, 2015 will be returned to the submitting agency unexamined.

Our NSPCL contract arrangement has been with **Eggleston Forensic Services, LLC**. If you would like to continue submitting forensic document examination cases to Mr. Eggleston, you may contact him directly. His contact information is:

**Eggleston Forensic Services, LLC**  
41590 Road 757, Cozad, NE 69130  
308-784-2562  
[CharlesEggleston@aol.com](mailto:CharlesEggleston@aol.com)

If you have any questions or need further information, please contact NSPCL Director Pam Zilly ([Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov](mailto:Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov))



## New NSPCL Facility Update

The new NSPCL facility project is currently **on schedule** with a goal of moving in early September 2015! Many different components are involved in moving a forensic laboratory, necessitating a considerable amount of coordination. These components will unfortunately result in some case-work downtime. We are working to minimize downtime as much as possible, but anticipate that there will be a period of a few weeks (perhaps longer for some disciplines) that we will be unable to accept new evidence and/or complete case work.

A portion of this downtime is due to the difficulties involved with moving sensitive laboratory instruments. Physically moving laboratory instrumentation requires involvement of the various instrument vendors from around the country to come here to pack, unpack and set up each of their instruments. In addition to the physical relocation of the NSPCL's section instrumentation, a number of tests must be completed to insure all instruments are operating properly in the new laboratory environment. Prior to the move to the new facility, analysts will be working to get as many evidence examinations completed as possible, so we can return your evidence! This is being done in order to minimize the amount of evidence that must be inventoried, secured and transported to the new facility. More detailed information will be provided as we get closer to the relocation date.

## Hints on Evidence!

- **Please use the most current 750 Submittal Form!** The form can be located on the Nebraska State Patrol website at:  
<http://www.statepatrol.nebraska.gov/crimelab.aspx>
- As we near our move date to the new NSPCL facility, we are asking that all of our customers come pick up evidence in a timely manner once you are notified that analysis is complete. The less evidence that needs be relocated and inventoried, the less downtime will be required to get up and running.
- Sealing evidence: Please remember to **INITIAL your taped seals** on the external areas of the evidence packaging.



### Evidence Section

Vicki Hopkins (Mgr.)

Jan Johnson (Sup.)

Margaret Wiesen



## New DNA Laboratory Report Format

ASCLD/LAB-*International* (ISO) standards require that accredited laboratories gather customer feedback regarding laboratory performance and to help identify possible areas for improvement. In 2013, the NSP Crime Laboratory distributed a customer feedback survey in order to determine areas that could be improved upon within the laboratory. The results of this survey suggested that lab reports, specifically those regarding DNA testing, were difficult to understand. While this was not a big surprise, the constructive feedback provided the lab with the motivation to pursue this issue further.

The Biology Unit worked on ways to simplify the reports to make them easier for the customers to understand. This proved to be a challenge due to the inherent need to maintain the scientific integrity of the reports as well as maintaining the information required by accreditation standards. While the information in the report would remain the same, we looked for ways to increase the use of plain English when possible limiting scientific terminology and to simplify the format in which the information is presented.

The NSPCL formed a focus group covering various demographics consisting of law enforcement agency representatives, prosecutors, and defense attorneys from around the state. We felt that it was important to consider readers with both minimal and extensive experience working with DNA reports. The members of the focus group were sent four different proposed DNA report formats to review and then were interviewed by NSPCL staff. The interviews were extremely beneficial and brought to light several “easy fixes” that the laboratory staff had not considered. While not unanimous, the overwhelming report format choice was clear.

As a result of your comments/input on the 2013 customer feedback survey, as well as effort spent by the focus group, we implemented the new lab report format for Biology (DNA) cases in early 2015. Thus far, the feedback has been very positive!

**We at the NSPCL like to hear from you, our customer, and learn your ideas for improvement! If you have any suggestions for improvement in a specific analytical section, please contact the section/unit supervisor (see page 10). If you have general laboratory quality concerns, please contact QA Manager Vicki Hopkins ([Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov](mailto:Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov)).**



### Biology Unit

*Jason Linder (Mgr.)*

*Katie Rector (Sup.)*

*Jeff Bracht*

*Christel Davis*

*Hillary Duin*

*Brandy Porter*

*Heidi Young*





## Community Outreach

On March 5, 2015, representatives from the NSP Crime Laboratory participated in the Zoetis-LPS-Novartis Science Fair at the Lancaster County Event Center for the third year in a row. The annual event features science experiments and demonstrations from 5th-8th graders from the Lincoln Public School district. Professional groups (like the NSPCL) were invited to share the different aspects of science that are being employed throughout the community. Hundreds of students, parents/siblings, and educators were able to participate in activities related to forensic science!



## Toxicology Section Update – Analysis Turnaround Times

The NSP Crime Laboratory Toxicology section began receiving cases for analysis from the Omaha area at the beginning of 2015. Due to the larger amount of toxicology cases being submitted, agencies will see an increase in the turnaround time for toxicology reports. We are very sorry for any difficulties this may create.

**If you have any questions/concerns, please contact the Chemistry Unit Manager – Celeste Laird**



Laboratory Director:  
Pam Zilly  
[Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov](mailto:Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov)

Nebraska State Patrol  
Crime Lab  
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Lincoln, NE 68506

(main) 402-471-8950  
(fax) 402-471-8954

Hours of Operation:  
Monday-Friday  
8am – 5pm

Evidence Receipt Hours:  
Monday-Friday  
9am-4pm

To contact the crime lab with  
general laboratory questions,  
call the main phone number  
or email Vicki Hopkins at:

[Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov](mailto:Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov)

The Lab Report Editor:  
Amy Weber  
[Amy.Weber@nebraska.gov](mailto:Amy.Weber@nebraska.gov)

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Margaret Wiesen

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(Manager) VACANT

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Sarah Zarnick

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Steve Burke  
Bridget Driver

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Abbey Dodds  
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#### Trace

Mike Auten

#### Toxicology

Brad Rutledge

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<http://statepatrol.nebraska.gov/>