



The Lab Report

Volume 8, Issue 1

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Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory Mission Statement

The mission of the Crime Laboratory Division is to provide quality and timely forensic science services to the State of Nebraska. To fulfill the mission of the laboratory, the following objectives are supported and understood by the staff of the NSP Crime Laboratory:

To provide timely, effective and impartial forensic services to aid in the investigation of crimes; To provide relevant, professional and impartial testimony in judicial proceedings; To disseminate scientific information and educate the criminal justice community regarding forensic science matters; To provide traceable and accurate results that are pertinent to the needs of the criminal justice community.

Analytical services are provided **FREE** to all submitting agencies.

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Current Case Assignment Turnaround Times (TAT)

TAT in the following sections is an average over the past 30 days:

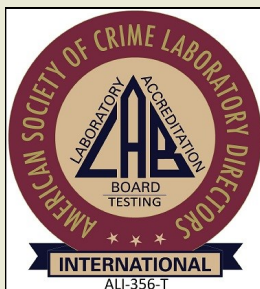
- ◆ Controlled Substances – 51 days
- ◆ Toxicology – 45 days

TAT in the following sections is an average over the past 90 days:

- ◆ Biology – Violent/Personal Crimes – 128 days
- ◆ Biology – Non-Violent/Property Crimes – 227 days
- ◆ Firearms/Toolmarks – 133 days**
- ◆ Latent Prints – 170 days
- ◆ Trace Evidence – 23 days

**** TAT in Firearms/Toolmarks is impacted by the fact that often evidence is not available to the section's forensic scientists until after examinations have been completed by other sections in the lab.**

Information is current as of 1/2/18 and obtained from the Lab Information Management System (LIMS). Numbers can fluctuate somewhat due to assignments being added, deleted, and/or combined as needed, after the original evidence submission to the laboratory.



ASCLD/LAB accredited
since 2004.



NSP Crime Laboratory 2017 Year in Review

As we enter into 2018, the NSP Crime Laboratory (NSPCL) would like to provide 2017 year-end statistics and general laboratory developments for the agencies we serve across the state of Nebraska.

The NSPCL received 6,183 case assignments in 2017 from **161 of our submitting agencies**—the most analytical assignments since the laboratory was opened and offering full services in 1973!

Other Notable Casework Statistics:

- The number of case assignments received by the NSPCL in 2017 increased by 9% from those received in 2016.
- Analysts completed 6,264 case assignments/reports in 2017— an increase of 7.3% from those completed in 2016.
- The Biology section and the Controlled Substances section both received a record number of case assignments in 2017.
 - ⇒ Biology section casework increased approximately 10% since 2016
 - ⇒ Controlled Substances section casework increased approximately 11% since 2016.



NSP Crime Laboratory 2017 Year in Review



Total Number of Agencies Served by the NSPCL in 2017: 161

| | Assignments Received/ Submitted (2017) | Reports Written/ Assignments Completed (2017) |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Laboratory Totals | 6183 | 6264 |
| Chemistry Unit | | |
| Controlled Substances | 4167 | 4012 |
| Toxicology | 587 | 739 |
| Trace | 32 | 60 |
| Biology Unit | | |
| Biology (Violent & Non-Violent) | 745 | 772 |
| Physical Sciences Unit | | |
| Latent Prints | 399 | 453 |
| Firearms/Toolmarks/ Footwear/Tire | 253 | 228 |

To proactively combat the increases that are trending with submissions, the following measures are being or have been implemented in the past year:

- In an attempt decrease turnaround times (TAT) for violent cases, the Biology Unit is currently devoting 75% of casework resources to testing violent cases and 25% to non-violent cases.
- The staffing level in the Biology Unit will be increasing by two in the near future due to a federal grant that will fund both positions. After completion of training, the additional forensic scientists will be able to greatly contribute to casework turnaround in Biology.
- The Latent Print section became fully staffed in December 2017 with the completion of training for the Latent Print trainee. The turnaround time in that section is already seeing a decrease as a result.
- The Firearm/Toolmark section became fully staffed in May 2017 with the hiring of a trained/AFTE certified forensic scientist. The new hire completed competency testing in August 2017 whereupon he was able to start casework.



NSP Crime Laboratory 2017 Year in Review

In addition to the scientific evidence analysis highlighted on the previous pages, our analysts perform a number of auxiliary functions necessary for the operation of the laboratory and the criminal justice system as a whole. One of these functions is to provide expert witness testimony for the court system (state and federal levels).

2017 Court Testimony Statistics:

- Total Number of Notices for Court: **622**
- Total Court Appearances by NSPCL Staff: **84**
- Total Miles Travelled for Court Testimony: **17,402**
- Number of Counties where Testimony was Provided: **21**
- Number of Overnight Stays to Provide Testimony: **15**

On occasion, analysts are required to go out-of-state to testify (expenses covered by the requested state/prosecuting attorney's office). In 2017, the NSPCL had two analysts required to testify a total of three times out-of-state .



NSPCL Crime Laboratory 2017 Year in Review



The NSPCL provides free trainings, presentations, and tours to requesting agencies/organizations throughout the year. All presentations/trainings/tours are provided free of charge! **Note: Tours are restricted to college-age school groups pursuing a career in a related field only (no high school groups), submitting agency representatives, attorneys, and forensic scientists from other agencies/professional organizations.**

2017 Presentations/Trainings Provided by NSPCL Staff

- Number of Presentations/Trainings Provided: **18**
- Number of Laboratory Facility Tours: **4**
- Approximate Number of Attendees: **615**

If you are interested in having an analyst provide training/presentation on a particular laboratory discipline or would like a laboratory tour, please contact NSPCL Laboratory Director Pam Zilly (Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov) for further information.





NSP Crime Laboratory 2017 Year in Review

The NSPCL currently maintains two forensic databases: the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). These databases are maintained by the analysts in the respective sections in which they are utilized. The NSPCL is the only laboratory in Nebraska that can enter samples into CODIS and release results of the subsequent searches.

2017 Database Statistics

CODIS (Combined DNA Index System)

- Offender Samples received for CODIS entry: **3759**
- CODIS Hits: **84**

AFIS (Automated Fingerprint Identification System)

- Latent Impressions searched through AFIS: **438**
- AFIS Hits: **253 (of those, 125 were cold hits)**



NSPCL Laboratory Staff Professional Organization Involvement



With accreditation and the scrutiny that forensic science has encountered throughout the years, forensic analysts are strongly encouraged to keep up-to-date with regard to the latest advancements in scientific techniques, research, training, and familiarization with new/emerging equipment. To accomplish this task, our analysts are active in the professional organizations relevant to their individual fields of expertise. Each analyst strives to attend at least one professional training annually, with many of our staff also being active in their respective scientific organization (committee members, conference presenters, and/or board members). We also attend a number of trainings sponsored by federal agencies (FBI, NIST) and some provided by a variety of private and public entities (BODE, Promega).

Number of Professional Trainings Attended by Staff in 2017: 27

Although not a requirement thus far in forensic science, several of our laboratory staff have gone above and beyond with obtaining certification(s) through their forensic discipline's professional organization!

The NSPCL Staff currently hold memberships in the below professional organizations:

- AAFS (American Academy of Forensic Sciences)
- ASCLD (American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors)
- AFQAM (The Association of Forensic Quality Assurance Managers)
- MAFS (Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists)
- SWAFS (Southwestern Association of Forensic Scientists)
- CLIC (Clandestine Laboratory Investigating Chemists Association)
- AFTE (Association of Firearm and Tool Mark Examiners)
- ACS (American Chemical Society)
- SOFT (Society of Forensic Toxicologists)
- IAI (International Association for Identification)
- NEIAI (Nebraska Division of the International Association for Identification)
- NAPE (Nebraska Association of Property and Evidence)
- ASTEE (American Society of Trace Evidence Examiners)



Take Note – Important Evidence Intake Announcement

Important
Information

Laboratory accreditation requirements mandate that everything we accept be properly sealed. We have seen more cases in 2017 than ever before. With that comes an urgent need to have everything coming to us correctly submitted.

We have noticed that many agencies are forgetting or do not know what the packaging/sealing requirements are for the submission of evidence to the NSPCL. It is very time consuming to correct these errors.

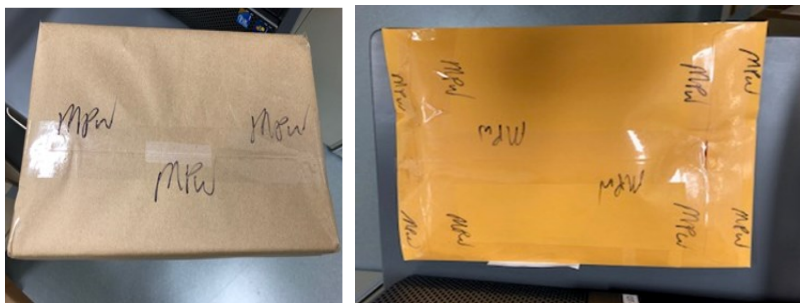
As a result, for the past year, we have been contacting and educating agencies in an attempt to assist them with proper submission. After three contacts to the same agency, we are sending a letter notifying them that the next time we receive a package submitted incorrectly, we will be sending the package back.

In 2017, we contacted 30 different agencies who have reached their three error limit. We have been returning items and will continue to do so, if they are not done correctly.

Please help us save time and money by educating your staff on the proper way to send evidence to the Crime Lab. *Instructions on submission can be found on the NSPCL website under "Forms you may need", then "Crime Lab Forms", "Crime Laboratory Manual" and then "Evidence Submission"

<https://nspcl.qualtraxcloud.com/showdocument.aspx?ID=10740>

Below are two photos showing how the evidence package should look. Boxes and envelopes need to be taped with the officer's initials crossing over the seal onto the package.



In addition, the NSPCL Evidence Techs do not open your evidence. We use the submittal form on the outside of the package to record the information.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated! Please let us know if you have any questions. We are always happy to assist. Thank you!



Laboratory Director:
Pam Zilly
Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov

Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab
3977 Air Park Rd.
Lincoln, NE 68524

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

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:

NSP.CrimeLab@nebraska.gov

The Lab Report Editor:
Amy Weber
Amy.Weber@nebraska.gov

Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab Staff Contact Information:

Laboratory Director

Pam Zilly Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov

Business Manager

John Sobus

Quality Assurance Manager

Vicki Hopkins (Manager) Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov

Evidence/Administration Section

Jan Johnson (Sup.)

Jan.Johnson@nebraska.gov

Margaret Wiesen (Evidence Technician)

Martha Pennington (Staff Assistant – Temp)

Physical Sciences Unit

Firearm/Toolmark Section

Kent Weber (Sup./Tech. Lead)

Kent.Weber@nebraska.gov

Cole Goater

Amy Weber

Latent Fingerprint Section

Mariana Ward (Sup./Tech. Lead)

Mariana.Ward@nebraska.gov

Bridget Driver

Sarah Zarnick

Chemistry Unit

Celeste Laird (Manager) Celeste.Laird@nebraska.gov

Controlled Substances

Jerry Smith (Sup/ Tech. Lead)

Jerry.D.Smith@nebraska.gov

Vicky Cowan

Meggan Macomber

Jake Oshlo

Trace

Amanda Neely (Sup./Tech. Lead)

Amanda.Neely@nebraska.gov

VACANT (forensic scientist)

Toxicology

Abbey Dodds (Sup./ Tech. Lead)

Abbegayle.Dodds@nebraska.gov

Debra Davis

Biology Unit

Jason Linder (Manager/Tech. Lead) Jason.Linder@nebraska.gov

Biology

Jeff Bracht

Brandy Porter

Dani Oshlo

Heidi Ellingson

Elizabeth Young

CODIS

Katie Rector (Sup.) Katherine.Rector@nebraska.gov

VACANT (CODIS tech)