

WHAT'S NEWS @ HFSC

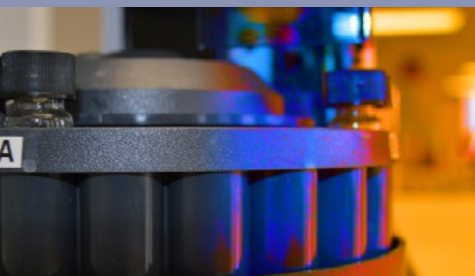
HOUSTON FORENSICS SCIENCE CENTER • MARCH 2017

HFSC Strives to Communicate Directly with Stakeholders, Community

INSIDE THIS EDITION



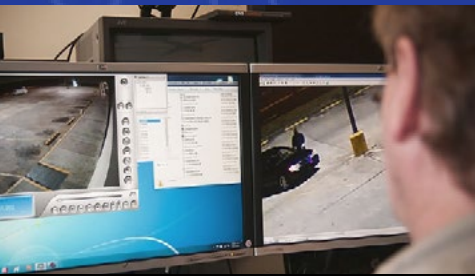
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It's been almost three years since the Houston Forensic Science Center took over management of what had previously been the Houston Police Department's Crime Lab, Crime Scene Unit and parts of its Identification Division. In a bold, unprecedented move, the City of Houston had placed the responsibility of all forensic functions in the hands of this independent, local government corporation overseen by a nine-member board of directors made up of community volunteers. The eyes of the forensic community once again turned to Houston, but this time rather than focus on a scandal-ridden crime lab the scientists have been waiting to see if this unique model can succeed.

During this time, HFSC has focused most of its efforts on improving quality and efficiencies, eliminating backlogs and decreasing turnaround times. And the hard work has paid off. Overall, average turnaround times across HFSC's eight sections have dropped 48 percent and backlogs have been eliminated in nearly all sections. Quality has simultaneously improved, and HFSC has received accolades for a blind testing program it has introduced into five disciplines. This program puts "fake" casework

into the flow, meaning an analyst never knows if they are doing real casework or being "quizzed." It allows HFSC to not only ensure their analysts are properly trained and competent, but to test its entire system and process.

None of this, however, is useful if it is not communicated to stakeholders. HFSC's most important stakeholder is the Houston community. We are a vital part of the justice system, and passionately believe the work we do helps improve public safety and confidence in that system. Our independence from law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government allows us to focus on the science and provide the system with unbiased information that can be used to investigate and solve criminal cases. By no means, however, does it mean that we do not need to work closely with all members of the justice system _ from law enforcement to prosecutors and the defense _ to ensure the work we do properly meets their needs.

In an effort to improve we are rolling out this monthly newsletter to communicate to all involved the issues we believe could be important to all stakeholders. We hope the information provided in this publication will be the start of fruitful conversations that will ultimately help us better serve the community.