



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor and Council Members

FROM: Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager

DATE: June 26, 2017

SUBJECT: Notification of Remediation of Mold on DNA Evidence

On April 25th, 2017, Signature Science notified the Austin Police Department's Forensic Lab that damp paperwork and at least one sexual assault kit (SAK) with mold was observed in a batch of DNA cases delivered to them for testing. Signature Science is one of the labs that the City contracted with to conduct DNA analysis while APD DNA lab operations are suspended.

Given the sensitivity regarding the handling of DNA samples, the purpose of this memo is to provide you information regarding the discovery of mold in a storage refrigerator and the actions taken to remediate the issue. *None of the evidence in the refrigerator had been tested and, therefore, had never been considered as DNA evidence in the deliberation of any case already adjudicated.* Please note that this storage refrigerator located in the evidence warehouse on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. is separate from the storage freezer located in the Forensics Lab that experienced a loss of temperature control in March 2016.

The following outlines the principal actions APD has taken:

- Signature Science's observation of mold was forwarded to DPS Capital Area Lab Section Manager on April 25. The next day, an inspection of the evidence warehouse walk-in refrigerator revealed mold on some boxes in the back containing cases mostly from the 1990s and early 2000s.
- APD contracted with Norfoxx Commercial Refrigeration to seal all seams on the outside of refrigerator on May 3 to prevent moisture from entering. Evidence warehouse personnel conducted an audit on cases in the evidence refrigerator. Of 1,629 cases inspected, 780 had no visible mold and 849 had some signs of mold.
- A new dehumidifier was installed on June 2; humidity level fell within National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) recommended standards on June 16. Remediation efforts to address the packaging that exhibited the presence of mold using a process recommended by the DPS Capital Area Lab Section Manager began on June 19.
- On June 21, Signature Science notified APD that *no issues were observed with the samples processed from the case originally reported to have mold.* Also, APD placed remediation efforts on hold pending further research on mold remediation. APD's Quality Assurance Manager sent out a request to QA Managers nationwide requesting information on how they have or would address the issue within their own evidence warehouses.

Although there has been some concern regarding notification of the mold issue, APD personnel began to address the issue immediately. We want to ensure that we are following best practices and have formally reached out to the forensic community for assistance. We have also contacted the Texas Forensic Science Commission for input on who could provide an assessment audit of APD's Quality Assurance program.

cc: Elaine Hart, Interim City Manager
Interim Police Chief Brian Manley
Assistant Chief Troy Gay