DPS forensic laboratory continues international accreditation
Independent evaluation confirms laboratory's technical competence

SANTA FE – The New Mexico Department of Public Safety's Forensic Laboratory Bureau achieved international reaccreditation in the disciplines of forensic biology (DNA and serology), firearms and toolmarks, controlled substance analysis, methamphetamine quantitation, and latent prints under the International Organization for Standardization / International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC 17025:2017) standards.

The NM DPS Forensic Laboratory Bureau supports all New Mexico law enforcement, criminal justice, and court systems by analyzing forensic evidence collected at crime scenes and presenting their scientific findings in court. The Forensic Laboratory Bureau has laboratories in Santa Fe, Las Cruces and Hobbs, New Mexico.

"An accredited laboratory inspires confidence in its customers and stakeholders," said Cabinet Secretary Jason R. Bowie. "The accreditation process can be daunting but ensures ongoing compliance to both industry standards and continual improvement of the operations. This level of accreditation confirms that the forensic science services DPS provides to New Mexico law enforcement, criminal justice and judicial agencies are standardized, with an efficient system devoted to quality."

Marcus J. Montoya, president of the New Mexico District Attorney Association and current Eighth Judicial District Attorney, was pleased to learn the forensic laboratory met all the criteria required for testing laboratories.

"The New Mexico District Attorneys continue pursuing justice with great confidence in the NM DPS Forensic Laboratory. The accreditation ensures that forensic analysis and testing meets the highest scientific standards, and that fact is incredibly important for all criminal justice stakeholders," said Montoya.

The DPS Forensic Laboratory Bureau Chief Katharina Babcock said accreditation confirms that an organization has confidence in its work product, and that this confidence has been confirmed by a third-party.

"It's about accountability to an external authority," said Babcock. "Accreditation is highly coveted for ongoing oversight and review of our operations. It's a standard that law enforcement, criminal justice agencies, and the courts expect."

The cornerstone of a successful accreditation assessment is confirmation of a robust quality assurance system, which lends itself to credibility, instilling public trust and confidence," said Babcock.

Conversely, accreditation by the accrediting body is only the beginning of a long process to maintain accreditation. Continued compliance is demonstrated through successful internal audits and annual reviews; both ensure attention to all aspects of the quality and operations systems in the lab are addressed, said Babcock.

The New Mexico Forensic Laboratory was established in 1972 as an original part of the New Mexico State Police Department. When the Department of Public Safety was created in 1987, NMSP became of division of the department, and the forensic laboratory was separated from NMSP and became a part of the DPS Technical and Emergency Support Division. In Fiscal Year 2023, the DPS Forensic Laboratory received more than 18,664 items for analysis associated with 6,641 cases from 300 law enforcement and criminal justice agencies.

The A2LA was established in 1978 and has more than 4,200 actively accredited certificates representing all 50 U.S. states and more than 50 countries.

About Department of Public Safety

Department of Public Safety (DPS) protects human life and property through the detection and prevention of criminal activity and enforcement of state laws. DPS is committed to providing the highest quality of public safety services for the State of New Mexico including vital leadership, scientific, training, technical, and operational support to the criminal justice community and the public.

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