



Fact Sheet



Public Affairs Division - Washington DC

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ATF Laboratory Services

The ATF Laboratory Services Division provides analytical and advisory services on scientific matters. Laboratory services is comprised of four organizational groups: the Forensic Science Laboratories (FSL), with facilities in Atlanta, San Francisco, Washington, D.C. and the Fire Research Laboratory (FRL). The Washington FSL and the FRL are collocated with Laboratory Services administrative offices at the National Laboratory Center in suburban Maryland.

The ATF laboratories have a distinguished history dating back to 1886. From two scientists working in the attic of the U.S. Treasury building, the operation has grown to a staff of more than 100 professionals. ATF laboratories are committed to providing accurate and authoritative scientific information needed to reduce violent crime and protect the public.

ATF laboratories are staffed with chemists, scientists, forensic biologists, engineers, fingerprint specialists, firearm and tool mark examiners, document examiners, and administrative personnel. ATF laboratory personnel hold leadership positions in numerous professional scientific organizations and are among the most highly qualified specialists in their fields. ATF actively supports and encourages professional certification of its scientists and engineers. Laboratory staff is made up of highly trained individuals specializing in the examination of evidence typically seen in fire, explosives and firearm related crimes who perform forensic exams, provide technical support, expert witness testimony, and advanced training to a wide range of national and international law enforcement personnel.

In fiscal year 2014, ATF's laboratories accomplished the following:

- Processed 2,220 forensic cases
- Processed 118 fire research cases
- Provided 83 days of expert testimony in the courts
- Worked 160 days at crime scenes
- Provided 671 days of training instruction for federal, state and local investigators and examiners

ATF laboratory personnel were involved in the creation of a national accreditation program for forensic laboratories. In 1984, ATF was the first federal laboratory to be

accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB). In 2011, the ATF laboratories underwent evaluations for accreditation to the ASCLD/LAB - International standards. Under the International Program ASCLD/LAB assesses a laboratory's capability using the International Organization of Standardization (ISO/IEC) 17025 General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories and the ASCLD/LAB International Supplemental requirements for forensic laboratories. The accreditation standards include requirements for personnel qualifications, evidence handling and preservation techniques, instrument maintenance, written protocols and procedures, calibration and use of comparison standards, internal and external proficiency testing, continuing education and report writing. In order to maintain accreditation, the laboratories undergo vigorous on site audits performed by ASCLD/LAB assigned assessors once every five years, with smaller surveillance visits occurring every 16 to 18 months.

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