FORENSIC SCIENTIST (CRIME SCENE)
CS-0401-11

INTRODUCTION

This position is located in the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS). The mission of the DFS is to provide high-quality, timely, accurate, and reliable forensic science services using best practices and best available technology, focusing on unbiased science and transparency, to enhance public safety and health.

The position is responsible for recognizing, recording, and recovering evidence in criminal investigations at the scene(s) of crime(s) by analyzing, photographing, collecting, preserving, and presenting physical evidence. Crime scenes include person crimes, such as homicides, sexual assaults, and robberies, as well as property crimes and traffic crashes, etc.

MAJOR DUTIES

Investigates assigned crime scenes in various locations in the city; assists with sealing the crime scene to protect and preserve important evidence.

Collects fingerprints/palm prints, tire and shoe prints, tool mark impressions, firearms) to facilitate positive identification and/or elimination, hair, clothing, fibers, and biological evidence; and analyzes and records crime scenes showing correlation between evidence and the scenes. Performs various chemical and photographic processes in the field or laboratory.

Uses digital cameras to photograph evidence at the crime scene that specifically correlates with collected data and other evidence deemed appropriate for the case.

Ensures that all persons who enter/visit the crime scene do not tamper with any evidence to avoid "evidence tampering" which might become an issue in court proceedings.

Processes evidence in the laboratory using latent print powders, chemical solutions, forensic light sources, and various cameras, lenses, and filters in order to develop and preserve evidence.

Attends autopsies to photograph injuries and fingerprint the deceased for identification purposes, and collect relevant physical evidence

Assists with improving operations, decrease turnaround times, streamline work processes, and work cooperatively and jointly with other scientists/staff members or the public to provide seamless customer service; also researches to determine if new and/or revise methods for performing analyses are warranted or determines the effectiveness of current analytical methods.

Follows evidence control procedures to maintain proper chain-of-custody of evidence, proper packaging, storage and integrity and ensures evidence is locked securely in a designated location before and after analysis.

Advises on the collection of evidence in each case, including those involving deaths, especially when homicide is suspected; evaluates risks concerning or identifying hazardous materials in the field and the laboratory.

Conducts a wide variety of complex and difficult analyses; decides what tests and procedures to use; and may conduct quantitative and qualitative analysis by using specific techniques, including but not limited to physical testing, visual analysis, identification and classification, comparisons, etc.

Utilizes computer software to analyze results of tests in order to perform calculations and keeps up-to-date on current studies, pamphlet, journals, and books for use in devising methods and tests; develops charts, graphs, and tables as aids to conduct tests; evaluates laboratory test results in the area of concern; prepares technical reports on findings and project results.

Testifies in court in connection with the evidence processed, developed and preserved as well as any examinations or analyses performed

Prepares detailed reports and supplements; accepts documents, and bar-codes evidence associated with each crime scene case.

Performs other related duties as assigned.

KNOWLEDGE REQUIRED BY THE POSITION

Comprehensive knowledge of principles, theories, concepts and practices of analytical chemistry, physical science, or biology or related field to the work.

Ability to perform in accordance with protocol, internal operations, etc., that are associated with various types of crime scene scenarios effectively.

Knowledge of mathematics and statistics as they relate to analytical laboratory work.

Knowledge of safety practices and procedures that apply to field analysis, particularly in the forensic laboratories; and knowledge, skill and ability to maintain research methods and techniques, keep informed of current literature and precedence relevant to the forensic scientific fields.

Knowledge of and skill in collecting and processing crime scene evidence utilizing a variety of technical equipment, materials, methods and photographic processes.; and ability to perform complex scientific analyses and adhere to quality assurance standards and processes with these methods.

Research skills associated with the crime scene, scientific methods, techniques and testing are required.

Knowledge of the rules of evidence and the methods used in presenting evidence in court; and policies and procedures for maintaining the chain-of-evidence integrity.

Ability to prepare technical forms, reports, and other correspondence; and excellent oral and written communication skills.

Ability to maintain effective working relationships with associates, consultants, regulatory agencies, and the general public; and ability to work safely without presenting a threat to self or others.

Ability to testify effectively in court.

Skill and ability to use a personal computer to prepare, store, and retrieve data and knowledge of software affiliated with crime scene data.

SUPERVISORY CONTROLS

Works under the administrative direction of the Crime Scene Sciences Director and Crime Scene Sciences Unit Manager who outline objectives and available resources. The supervisor discusses timeframes and the scope and nature of the assignment including the possible stages. The incumbent independently plans and carries out assignments, and interprets policies and procedures in terms of established objectives, keeps supervisor informed of progress on potentially controversial matters.

Completed assignment are reviewed for conformance to guidelines, feasibility, soundness of overall approach and the effectiveness of meeting objectives, deadlines, and expected results and adherence to requirements.

GUIDELINES

Guides consist of policies and procedures of DFS; governing laws and regulations of the District and Federal Government; methods, processes, techniques, procedures, protocols, testing regulations, previous/precedent cases, technical references, forensic techniques and literature, catalogs and handbooks, internal protocol and instructions, etc. These guides are normally applicable, but may require the incumbent to exercise judgment when applying them to specific work situations/cases that may not be covered.

COMPLEXITY

The work requires performing a variety of research and tests which often times are different or unrelated based on the crime scene requiring substantial know-how in solving significant issues and problems of situational difficulty and physical impediments. Determines the appropriate process, sequence and direction of the work and interprets the collected evidence and test data in order to identify whether modifications are required and/or if there are any questionable problems or issues. Adaptability and flexibility is required in order to adhere to protocols are essential; and contends with the absence of criteria; and with new methods and equipment. Exercises discretion and sound judgment in determining proper courses of action from personal experience and must be able to assess and evaluate a variety of situations, problems, conditions, or questions.

SCOPE AND EFFECT

Conducts scientific investigations including collecting the appropriate samples to prepare for examination/testing; and prepares documentation regarding findings and analyzes that is instrumental in preparing the results of the tests; and identifies problems that may alter collected evidence. Ensures that all documentation is in the appropriate order for court cases and/or final discovery.

The results of the work affects the department's credibility adequacy, accuracy and effectiveness in of the field investigations, laboratory tests, and ensures it relevancy to the case to assist with closure. The results are also binding and affect the judicial proceedings.

PERSONAL CONTACTS

Contacts are with agency officials and employees, laboratory personnel, consultants, regulatory agencies, the general public, law enforcement, other scientists, and investigators.

PURPOSE OF CONTACTS:

Contacts are for the purpose of collecting/gathering and processing the crime scene, exchanging information, ensuring the orderly flow of work as it pertains to crime scene. Works cooperatively with the public and other City employees; and work safely without presenting a risk to self or others.

PHYSICAL DEMANDS:

The incumbent is subject to handling dead and decomposed bodies and bodies that may pose a health risk, strong odors, insects, hostile and emotionally charged situations and animals. Manual dexterity, flexibility and boxes/cases that may require considerable strenuous physical exertion such as lifting/moving objects up to fifty (50) pounds; and long periods of standing, walking, stretching, bending and sufficient eye sight and hand coordination is required.

The incumbent must be prepared to work in confined spaces; at various building heights or on booms and ladders.

WORK ENVIRONMENT:

Work is performed in the field (crime scenes), in the laboratory during the testing, analysis, and autopsies, as well as, in an office setting when preparing documentation/reports, etc. Also work in a variety of weather conditions with exposure to the elements and travel/walk over rough, uneven, or rocky surfaces. The incumbent may be exposed to hazardous materials, toxic substances, and blood borne pathogens and is required to follow safe field and laboratory practices and wear protective clothing, including facial masks, safety glasses, gloves, etc.

Additionally, may be exposed to various objectionable material (e.g. pornography, etc.). The work may require the incumbent to be in unstable locations necessitating the wearing of a ballistic safety vest.

The position requires the use of electronic communication devices including (but not limited to): Cell phones, communication radios, and wireless computers.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT FACTORS

Shift, weekend, and holiday work is required.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

This position's duty station will be housed within the Consolidated Forensic Laboratory (CFL) which is a protection-sensitive facility. As such, incumbents of this position shall be subject to criminal background checks, background investigations, and mandatory drug and alcohol testing, as applicable.

The nature of the DFS mission necessarily involves the potential risks associated with biological or chemical hazards, including morgue functions. Although contact with these functions is intended to be minimal, the risks are nevertheless possible; training to recognize, address, and mitigate these risks is required as is dealing with potentially personally difficult topics, such as crime, death, and disease.

EXPERIENCE AND EDUCATION

Has demonstrated competency (by DFS training & competency standards) in the following areas:

1. Latent Print Processing
2. Collection of Biological/DNA evidence
3. Processing of vehicles
4. Processing of Crime Scenes

In addition to this competency, must have two years of documented experience performing these tasks independently.

Or

Must have equivalent documented training and competency with another forensic laboratory/organization and have two years documented experience performing these tasks independently. IAI (Int'l Assoc. of Identification) crime scene certification may substitute for one year of this experience. The individual must meet the DFS crime scene competency requirements within the first six months of employment.

A Bachelor of Science degree in a natural or forensic science from an accredited university; graduate of programs accredited by the Forensic Science Educational Program Accreditation Commission (FEPAC; www.aafs.org/fepac) preferred; successful completion of the DFS Crime Scene Scientist Training Program and three (3) years of experience or equivalent experience and training at another forensic laboratory.

A Bachelor's degree in another course of study may be substituted with a minimum of four (4) years of experience in a relevant, equivalent full-time crime scene position.

LICENSURE/CERTIFICATION: See Experience and Education Requirements

FLSA Status: Exempt

Standards: US OPM Job Family Standard for Professional Work in the Natural Resources Management and Biological Sciences, GS-0400, September 2005

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