

An Overview of the FDLE Crime Scene Program

In July 1958, the Florida Sheriff's Bureau reported its crime detection laboratory, newly equipped with \$28,000 worth of equipment, had assisted with investigating 57 cases in the state, resulting in 48 arrests. At the time, the crime scene response team consisted of laboratory members with no specialized crime scene training who responded to scenes with minimal equipment.

In 1979, FDLE was appropriated 15 crime laboratory analyst positions for the five FDLE crime laboratories located statewide. Each Laboratory obtained a dedicated Crime Scene response van and supplies valued at approximately \$85,000. Analysts received extensive training, and when not working crime scenes, devoted time to providing training to local law enforcement agencies.

In 2019, FDLE Crime Scene Sections in four regional laboratories processed 315 crime scene cases. The crime scene analysts use state-of-the-art technology including but not limited to digital cameras, 3D Laser scanners, alternate light sources, ground penetrating radar, metal detectors, and computer assisted sketching and court demonstrative software programs. The current cost estimate for outfitting an FDLE Crime Scene Section with equipment and supplies is approximately \$400,000.

Four FDLE regional crime laboratories presently have a Crime Scene Section: Pensacola, Tallahassee, Jacksonville, and Fort Myers. Crime laboratory analysts are on-call 24/7 and respond to requests for examination and processing of major crime scenes and evidence collection. A critical part of a criminal investigation is to locate, document, collect, and preserve potentially probative physical evidence. This evidence may be later analyzed at the crime laboratory by one or more forensic disciplines.

FDLE crime scene analyst undergo a rigorous training program and participate in continuing education. Minimum qualifications for analysts are presently: A bachelor or advanced degree in physical, biological or forensic science from an accredited college or university with completion of at least 20 credit hours in physical or biological science-related coursework graded at a "C" or better; or a non-science degree with completion of at least 12 credit hours in physical or biological science-related coursework graded at a "C" or better and a minimum of two years professional experience in the Crime Scene Investigation discipline in an accredited forensic laboratory or an accredited law enforcement agency. International Association for Identification (IAI) certification may substitute for the required college education. Professional experience in the Crime Scene Investigation discipline in either an accredited forensic laboratory or an accredited law enforcement agency may substitute on a year-for year basis for the required college education.