



Quality Division Use Only

Quality Tracking #:	<input type="text" value="2021-056"/>	Classification:	<input type="text" value="Corrective Action"/>
Non-Conformance Level:	<input type="text" value="Class II"/>	Section:	<input type="text" value="Seized Drugs"/>
Date of Discovery:	<input type="text" value="09/21/21"/>	Date of Incident:	<input type="text" value="09/21/21"/>

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable:	Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:
2021-30762	120312621

Description of Non-conformance:
While weighing evidence a Seized Drugs analyst found a clandestine tablet underneath a balance located in a common area. Due to the distinct characteristics of the tablet, the section analyst was able to determine what case the tablet originated from.

Additional Information/Follow-Up:
On September 21, 2021, after the clandestine tablet was found under the analytical balance #4 by analyst 1, she notified the section manager who took custody of the tablet and stored it in his secured locker in the evidence vault. The manager sent an email notification to the section with a picture of the tablet so the analysts could review their recent casework and could possibly associate the tablet to one of their cases. Later on the same day, analyst 2 spoke with the manager and identified the tablet as possibly coming from one of her cases. Analyst 2 recognized the tablet as being similar to other clandestine tablets from a case she had inventoried and analyzed on September 16, 2021 the previous week using the same analytical balance (AB#4). Prior to speaking with the manager, analyst 2 had re-inventoried and re-weighed the evidence in this case (consisting of various tablets separated into 4 sub-items) to compare with her case file notations and found that the recorded weights for all of the items were consistent with what was noted. However, one of the sub-items (1-1-1-2) only had 9 tablets although the notation stated that there were 10 tablets. All of the other tablet counts matched what was noted. Analyst 2 did not note these re-weights, but only compared them to what was in the case notes. These actions led analyst 2 to believe that the found tablet was originally part of sub-item 1-1-1-2 and that it had rolled under the balance after the inventory, but before the initial weight was recorded.



Summary of Root Cause Analysis:

Note: Incidents are documented for tracking purposes and trend analysis. Root Cause Analysis is not required for incidents.

There were two main contributing causes for this nonconformance. The first contributing cause was related to the type of weighing container used to weigh the tablets. Although the analyst transported the tablets inside a beaker to the analytical balance station, the tablets were poured onto a flat weighing paper and this allowed the tablet to roll off of the balance. This type of flat weighing paper is readily available at these balance stations. If a concave weighing container (e.g. weighing boat, beaker) is needed, the analyst must bring this type of container with them to these stations. The second contributing cause was attributed to the cleaning up process at shared analytical balance areas. There are two analytical balances used by the section. Both of these balances are located in shared areas and are not specific to an analyst's work area. Evidence items that need to be weighed on this type of balance are brought to these weighing stations after they are inventoried at the analyst's bench areas. The cleaning process for this shared weighing station does not include checking under analytical balances nor surrounding areas since small amounts of sample are weighed on this type of balance.

Actions Taken:

On October 22, 2021, analyst 2 re-inventoried and re-weighed the evidence sub-items (1-1-1-1 to 1-1-1-4) with the manager and noted the results in the case notes. On November 9, 2021, the manager transferred the found tablet to analyst 2 who weighed the tablet noting the result in the case notes. The tablet was then assigned sub-item number 1-1-1-5 and was described as "1 found tablet" in the case notes. The report was updated to change the the number of tablets in sub-item 1-1-1-2 from 10 tablets to 9 tablets, add the found tablet as sub-item 1-1-1-5, and include a header referencing the found tablet and Quality Report 2021-056. In JusticeTrax LIMS, the chain of custody for a sub-item follows that of the parent. To clarify that the found tablet, sub-item 1-1-1-5, was separated from the parent for a period of time, a note was added to the sub-item chain of custody denoting its previous transfers prior to being added back to the parent. On November 17, 2021, weighing boats were placed at both balance stations, making them now readily available for analysts to use. In addition, a new rotating cleaning schedule will be implemented in January 2022. This rotating schedule includes the cleaning and examination of the analytical balance weighing stations. During a section meeting held on November 19, 2021, the section manager discussed this nonconformance with staff members. Analysts were reminded of the importance of cleaning and checking these weighing stations to ensure evidence isn't misplaced during their weighing. Analysts were also advised to carry items such as tablets/capsules to the analytical weighing stations in concave weighing containers to prevent them from rolling off during transportation. In addition, they were advised to use concave weighing containers within the balance weighing area to prevent this type of evidence from rolling off.

Section Manager: James Miller

Date: 11/23/21

Division Director: Amy Castillo

Date: 12/10/21

Incidents or Corrective Actions that involve the Biology/DNA section are reviewed by the Technical Leader and CODIS Administrator.



Houston Forensic Science Center
Incident/Corrective Action Report
Quality Division

Technical Leader: N/A
CODIS Administrator: N/A

Date: N/A
Date: N/A

Quality Director: Erika Ziemak

Date Closed: 12/13/21