



Quality Division Use Only

Quality Tracking #:	2023-018	Classification:	Corrective Action
Risk Level:	Class II	Section:	Seized Drugs
Date of Discovery:	04/28/23	Date of Incident:	04/28/23

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable:	Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:
2023-02057	024670523

Description of Non-conformance:
A Seized Drugs analyst found a clandestine tablet on the floor while cleaning her work area.

Additional Information/Follow-Up:
A clandestine tablet was found under the analyst's workbench table on April 27, 2023. The analyst immediately notified her supervisor and took custody of the tablet. She placed the found tablet in a separate ziplock bag and then placed it in the evidence envelope of case 2023-02057. The analyst secured the evidence envelope inside the analyst's locker in the evidence vault.

The analyst recognized the unusual appearance of the found tablet and its likeness to item 1-1-1 of case 2023-02057. On April 12, 2023, the Seized Drugs analyst received case 2023-02057 and inventoried its contents. While the analyst was opening the case and taking the evidence out of the evidence envelope, the evidence fell on the floor. The analyst picked up the evidence and proceeded with the inventory. Because the inventory of the case was conducted after the evidence had fallen, the found tablet would not have been included in the inventory of the case. While the found tablet appeared to have the same logo and shape as item 1-1-1 of case 2023-02057, it could not be definitively associated with 2023-02057.

Item 1-1-1 of case 2023-02057 was analyzed and identified as containing MDMA. The weight of item 1-1-1 was recorded as 1.2872 grams. Per the analyst's case notes, item 1-1-1 is two blue tablets, item 1-1-2 is two blue tablets, and item 1-1-3 is five empty plastic ziplock bags. Item 1-1-2 was not analyzed; however, the analyst determined a net weight, and it was documented in the case notes as 0.98 grams. When adding the net weights for items 1-1-1 and 1-1-2, the total weight was 2.26 grams. The weight listed on the submission form associated with the case was 2.94 grams. The analyst noticed a difference between their total weight and the submitter's weight; however, this was not a concern to the analyst since it is common to see discrepancies in this range between the analyst's weight and the submitter's weight due to different balances being used.

The analyst took a picture of the found tablet and shared it with the section via the section Teams chat so the analysts could review their recent cases and confirm if they had worked any tablet case with the same logo. None of the other analysts recognized the tablet or recently worked a case with that logo.



Summary of Root Cause Analysis:

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

A possible contributing cause for this nonconformance was attributed to a toolbox and level ruler on the floor located in front of the analyst's workbench table that blocked the analyst's view when looking for the evidence that fell.

Tablets come in different forms, sizes, textures and shapes. Even when actions are taken to prevent tablet loss during analysis, there will always be a risk when handling evidence of this nature.

Actions Taken:

Since the found tablet could not be definitively associated to a specific case, it was analyzed under a separate forensic case number (2023-08088). The analyst reported the results of analysis with a statement referencing this Quality report on July 31, 2023. The tablet was retained and stored by the Quality Division.

On September 14, 2023, the section supervisor sent an email to the Harris County District Attorney's Office Grand Jury and Integrity Divisions to notify them of this incident. A copy of the laboratory reports 2023-02057 and 2023-08088 were attached to the email.

During a section meeting held on September 21, 2023, staff members were reminded of their responsibility to ensure their work areas and common areas are thoroughly cleaned and organized at all times.

The analysts' workstations were checked to ensure all objects that can block the visibility or interfere with analysis were removed.

Section Manager: James Miller

Date: 01/11/24

Division Director: Amy Castillo

Date: 01/19/24

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

Technical Leader: N/A

Date: N/A

CODIS Administrator: N/A

Date: N/A

Quality Director: Jackeline Moral

Date Closed: 01/19/24