



Houston Forensic Science Center
Nonconformance Report
Quality Division

Quality Tracking #:	<input type="text" value="2023-045"/>	Classification:	<input type="text" value="Incident"/>
Risk Level:	<input type="text" value="Moderate to High"/>	Section:	<input type="text" value="Crime Scene"/>
Date of Discovery:	<input type="text" value="12/03/23"/>	Date of Incident:	<input type="text" value="11/17/23"/>

Forensic Case Number(s), if applicable:	Agency Case Number(s), if applicable:
2023-12754	164293323

Description of Nonconformance:
An unreported item of evidence was located in a Crime Scene Unit (CSU) vehicle by a CSU member on December 03, 2023.

Additional Information:
The item located in the vehicle was from a scene worked on November 17, 2023. The item was not listed in the notes nor the report by the Lead CSI and therefore would not have been identified as missing during the technical or administrative review process of the report and case packet.

A member of CSU was cleaning out trash and stocking CSU vehicle #29 when two swab boxes were found in a basket. The swab boxes were built up and had writing on them. One box was empty and only listed a case number and initials. The second box contained a swab and the case number, swab location, and a time of collection was documented on the box. It is typical for CSIs to create the boxes and prefill some information while on scene prior to collection in order to streamline processing; however, when collection information and times are noted, it is indicative that the item is a piece of evidence. The swab box containing the swab was determined to be an item of evidence and was secured in an evidence locker in the CSU basement by CSU Management while an investigation was initiated.

The investigation indicated that, in this instance, there were two squads working together on scene. Four CSIs responded to the scene: one Lead CSI and one Scene Assist CSI from one squad, and two no-barcode assists from another squad who were on scene to provide assistance. The scene was a small living space and there was not a lot of room within the unit. The two no-barcode assists were preparing evidence packaging at the CSU vehicle to stay out of photos while the Lead CSI and Scene Assist performed the scene processing. Once the Lead CSI was ready to collect evidence, the no-barcode assists went into the scene to assist.

The swab found in the CSU vehicle was collected in the kitchen of the scene. The Lead CSI would go into the kitchen and collect the swabs, then bring them back into the main room and place them in the box that was being



held by the first no-barcode assist. The first no-barcode assist would write on the swab box where the Lead CSI said the swabs were collected from and note the time collected. The second no-barcode assist was compiling the swab boxes in a basket to assist with maintaining evidence for scribing notes. The Scene Assist completed the sketching and measuring portion of the scene processing and then began to scribe the Lead CSI's evidence list to note the items that were collected. The second no-barcode assist would read the evidence items out to the Scene Assist as they were removed from the basket and put into the evidence envelope. At this point, it is unclear how the one empty box and the one completed box with a swab were overlooked and remained in the basket.

During scene clean up, the basket with the evidence item was placed back in the CSU vehicle and securely stored for the time that the evidence item was not accounted for in the case record.

In discussion with the involved CSIs, it was mentioned that different CSU squads use different containers within the vehicles to aid in collection. One squad identified that they use the basket to collect multiple swabs while another squad indicated that they use a pencil case, both are available in the vehicle.

Summary of Root Cause Analysis:

N/A

Actions Taken:

The item of evidence was tagged to the Houston Police Department property room on December 11, 2023.

Report #0001 was amended on January 8, 2024, to include the addition of one DNA swab and contained the following report statement: "This report has been issued to amend laboratory report #0001 issued on 11/25/2023. The amended report adds the addition of one (1) DNA swabs that was collected during the time of scene processing. The original report is available at HFSC upon request. See quality report 2023-045."

Communication between squads was discussed in the nonconformance interviews with the individuals involved.

In early 2024, an evidence searching and note taking activity was created by CSU Management and completed by the entire unit in May of 2024. The activity monitored individual CSIs' abilities to find and document a variety of evidence items in hard to locate scenarios and compared how CSIs would document specific situations. The activity also included a verbal question and discussion section in which CSU Supervisors evaluated CSIs' responses to ensure understanding of the activity and SOP requirements in addition to the importance of note taking to support conclusions. One administrative defect was identified in the review of the notes from all CSIs. The defect would not have impacted the technical results of real casework and could have been identified in a technical or administrative review which were not performed during this activity.



In the CSU Management meeting on June 06, 2024, clarification was given regarding clear communication between CSIs on scene and what might constitute too many people on scene if no-barcode assists are present. Information was also presented regarding when a Lead CSI needs to document the responsibilities of CSU staff on scene to be able to identify tasks if no barcode assists are present.

Section Manager: Carina Haynes

Date: 08/30/24

Division Director: Carina Haynes

Date: 08/30/24

Technical Leader: Nicole Teele

Date: 8/26/2024

CODIS Administrator: N/A

Date: N/A

Quality Director: Jackeline Moral

Date Closed: 09/04/24