



Office of Inspector General | United States Postal Service

Audit Report

U.S. Postal Inspection Service Forensic Laboratory Services

Report Number 19-004-R20 | March 30, 2020



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Highlights

Objective

Our objective was to determine whether the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has efficient and effective controls for packaging and safeguarding evidence.

Forensic Laboratory Services (FLS) consists of the National Forensic Laboratory near Washington, D.C., and 22 digital laboratories throughout the country. FLS has been accredited since 2009 and employs forensic scientists, analysts, and contractors to assist in identifying individuals responsible for postal-related crimes. FLS is comprised of four units which analyze a wide variety of evidence, such as explosives, firearms, handwriting, fingerprints, controlled substances, computers, and phones.

When a postal inspector needs evidence to be analyzed, it is packaged and delivered to FLS in person or sent via Registered or Express Mail. A forensic scientist or analyst is assigned to analyze and secure the evidence while in their custody. Once the analysis is complete, a written report is provided and the evidence is packaged and returned to the inspector. The forensic scientist or analyst may later testify regarding the evidence examined.

During fiscal year (FY) 2019, FLS had 53 employees and four contractors, with an operating budget of \$1,032,551. FLS analyzed 3,141 evidence submissions that contained over 125,000 pieces of evidence.

Findings

FLS has effective controls for receiving, handling, and shipping evidence. However, opportunities exist to enhance the safeguarding of evidence through improved physical security and consistent safety training. In addition, FLS did not meet evidence examination timeliness goals.

Specifically, we found that:

- FLS did not always adhere to building access control policy. We conducted site visits at the National Forensic Laboratory during October and November 2019. We observed that construction managers did not always escort their workers into the laboratory; the door to the room where visitor badges are

stored was propped open, bypassing card reader access control; and a temporary visitor badge was left in an open area accessible to the public.

FLS management delegated the responsibility of distributing visitor badges, which can provide access to common areas, and escorting construction workers to the construction manager. However, that manager did not always adhere to the policy of physically escorting the workers and instead would observe them as they needed to leave the construction area. Based on our observations and the layout of the laboratory - which is not an open floor plan - we determined that the manager's views of restricted areas can be obstructed.

Postal Service policy requires all visitors to be escorted while in controlled areas and all temporary badges be controlled. Not properly escorting visitors and leaving visitor badges unsecured could allow unauthorized access to areas where confidential evidence is being analyzed and stored.

- During FY 2019, three of 57 personnel did not complete all of the required safety training. Per the FLS Health and Safety Manual, laboratory personnel must complete safety training annually. The training records are stored in a newly developed system and unit management is required to ensure their staff complete the training. Management stated they were transitioning to the new system and overlooked the fact that the three personnel had not taken the required training. If personnel are not properly trained to safely handle hazardous evidence and respond to laboratory emergencies, they could be injured and evidence could be damaged or destroyed.
- In FY 2019, FLS did not achieve its overall laboratory and unit-specific timeliness goals for examining evidence. FLS has an overall timeliness goal of an average of 60 days to analyze evidence and produce a summary report. Each unit in the laboratory has a 30-day average timeliness goal for immediate and high priority evidence. Immediate priority evidence requires immediate attention by an analyst and is assigned for processing and examination as soon as possible. High priority evidence is processed after immediate priority evidence, but before routine evidence. Per FLS, evidence submissions not completed within 90 days are considered backlogged. FLS

has not met its evidence submission timeliness goals since FY 2015; however, backlogged evidence was reduced in FY 2019.

In FY 2019:

- FLS took an average of 125 days to analyze all priority types of evidence submissions, 65 days longer than its average 60-day timeliness goal. Further analysis determined that 1,200 of 3,141 (38 percent) evidence submissions took longer than 60 days to be examined. The Fingerprint Unit accounted for 518 (43 percent) evidence submission examinations that took longer than 60 days to complete. One fingerprint submission took 716 days to complete.
- The units within FLS took an average of 40 days to analyze evidence submissions categorized as immediate and high priority, 10 days longer than its average timeliness goal. Further analysis determined that 380 of 1,161 (33 percent) immediate and high priority evidence submission examinations were not completed within 30 days. One immediate priority evidence submission took 114 days to complete and one high priority evidence submission took 707 days to complete.
- The laboratory had 1,042 of 3,141 (33 percent) backlogged examinations of evidence submissions. Of those, 464 (45 percent) took over 365 days to complete. One evidence submission examination took 736 days.

This occurred because of staffing shortages. FLS is authorized 68 full-time employees but currently has 15 vacancies. FLS is working to hire qualified candidates and has also hired four contractors to work at the laboratory. Management stated that filling vacancies in the Washington, D.C. area is difficult because of the competitive job market. FLS updates its fiscal year objectives document annually to include timeliness and backlog reduction targets. However, these documents did not contain plans to address staffing shortages. A plan should be specific, measurable, relevant, and timely. Not analyzing evidence timely could negatively impact criminal investigations and court proceedings.

Recommendations

We recommended management:

- Ensure all visitor badges at the National Forensic Laboratory are secured and reinforce the Postal Service's physical security control policy by providing periodic briefings to all staff.
- Direct the FLS safety officer to verify all personnel complete required annual safety training.
- Create a plan to address staffing shortages.

Transmittal Letter



OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

March 30, 2020

MEMORANDUM FOR: GARY R. BARKSDALE
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

PATRICIA MANZOLILLO
DIRECTOR, FORENSIC LABORATORY SERVICES

A digital signature of Margaret B. McDavid, showing the text "Margaret B. McDavid" in a cursive font. Above the signature, there is a small text box that reads "Signed by McDavid, Margaret" and "VSPDF authenticity with eSign Desktop".

FROM: Margaret B. McDavid
Deputy Assistant Inspector General
for Inspection Service and Information Technology

SUBJECT: Audit Report – U.S. Postal Inspection Service Forensic
Laboratory Services (Report Number 19-004-R20)

This report presents the results of our audit of U.S. Postal Inspection Service Forensic Laboratory Services.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Byron Bustos, Acting Director, Inspection Service, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit Response Management

Results

Introduction/Objective

This report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service's Forensic Laboratory Services (Project Number 19-004). Our objective was to determine whether the U.S. Postal Inspection Service has efficient and effective controls for packaging and safeguarding evidence.

Background

The Postal Inspection Service maintains a National Forensic Laboratory and 22 digital laboratories, which make up Forensic Laboratory Services (FLS). It employs forensic scientists, analysts, and contractors to assist in identifying individuals responsible for postal-related crimes. During fiscal year (FY) 2019, FLS had an operating budget of \$1,032,551. FLS had been accredited by the American National Standards Institute National Accreditation Board since 2009 and was accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation in 2019. FLS goes through the full accreditation process every five years to ensure the laboratory maintains the highest international standards. This comprehensive review covers many areas of the laboratory, such as the security of the building, the calibration of machines, and the qualifications of staff. The accreditation board also conducts a smaller scale review of employee proficiency exams¹ every year to certify FLS's accreditation.

When a postal inspector needs evidence to be analyzed, it is packaged and delivered in person to FLS or sent via Registered or Express Mail. When the evidence arrives at the laboratory, it is assigned a priority level of immediate, high, or routine. Immediate priority evidence requires immediate attention by an analyst and is assigned for processing and examination as soon as possible. High priority evidence is processed after immediate priority evidence, but before routine evidence. The evidence is stored in a secure evidence room until a forensic scientist or analyst is assigned to analyze the evidence and write a detailed report. Once the analysis is complete and the report has been finalized,

the evidence is packaged and returned to the postal inspector. The forensic scientist or analyst may later testify regarding the evidence examined.

FLS is comprised of four units with 57 personnel.² The National Forensic Laboratory houses the Questioned Documents & Imaging Unit, the Fingerprint Unit, and the Physical Sciences Unit, all of which analyze a wide variety of evidence, such as explosives, firearms, handwriting, fingerprints, and controlled substances.

The Digital Evidence Unit is comprised of 22 laboratories across the country and examines computers, phones, and other digital media storage devices. FLS uses contractors to conduct all DNA analysis and uses contractors on an as needed basis for controlled substance analysis. During FY 2019, FLS examined 3,141 evidence submissions³ containing over 125,000 pieces of evidence.

We found FLS has effective controls for receiving, handling, and shipping evidence; however, opportunities exist to enhance the safeguarding of evidence through improved physical security and consistent safety training. In addition, FLS did not meet evidence examination timeliness goals.

Finding #1: Physical Security

FLS did not always adhere to building access control policies. We conducted site visits at the National Forensic Laboratory⁴ during October and November 2019. During that time, construction managers did not always escort their workers within restricted areas of the laboratory; the door to the room that stored visitor badges

“FLS goes through the full accreditation process every five years to ensure the laboratory maintains the highest international standards.”

¹ A proficiency exam is a mock forensic examination conducted annually to test the capabilities and accuracy of the forensic analyst or technician when analyzing evidence.

² At the end of FY 2019, FLS had 53 full-time employees and four contractors, for a total of 57 personnel. They are authorized for 68 full-time employees.

³ FLS creates evidence submissions to group individual pieces of evidence from a case based on the evidence type and analysis needed. For example, a bottle of pills may contain hundreds of individual pieces of evidence but would result in one submission. An additional submission could be created if the outside of the bottle needed to be tested for fingerprints.

⁴ We also conducted a site visit to one Digital Evidence Laboratory, which did not have any physical security findings.

was propped open, bypassing the card reader access control; and a temporary visitor badge was left in an open area accessible to the public.

U.S. Postal Service policy⁵ requires all visitors to be escorted while in controlled areas and all temporary badges be controlled. FLS management delegated the responsibility of distributing badges and escorting construction workers to the construction manager, who had expanded access⁶ to the laboratory. Construction workers only had limited access,⁷ requiring the construction manager to escort workers to restricted areas. However, that manager did not always adhere to the policy of physically escorting them and instead observed them as they needed to leave the construction area. Based on our observations and the layout of the laboratory - which is not an open floor plan - we determined that the construction manager's views of some restricted areas can be obstructed.

Both limited access and expanded access visitor badges were stored in a box in a secured room near the entrance of the National Forensic Laboratory. The door to the secured room was kept propped open, which allowed the construction workers to drop off their badges during periodic breaks. Per policy, the construction manager should have been collecting and logging the distribution and return of visitor badges. Despite this, we witnessed a badge left in the main lobby, accessible to the public. When we informed FLS personnel about the issue, the individual immediately secured the badge, but stated that this is an ongoing issue.

Not properly escorting visitors and leaving visitor badges unsecured could allow unauthorized access to areas where confidential evidence is being analyzed and stored.

Recommendation #1

We recommend the **Director, Forensic Laboratory Services**, ensure all visitor badges at the National Forensic Laboratory are secured and reinforce the U.S. Postal Service physical security control policy by providing periodic briefings to all staff.

Finding #2: Annual Safety Training

During FY 2019, three of 57 personnel⁸ did not take all of the required safety training courses.⁹ Per policy,¹⁰ laboratory personnel must take the annual safety training as outlined by the laboratory safety officer. Each year, the laboratory safety officer determines the staff's safety training needs. These trainings cover topics such as fire safety, common hazards in a laboratory, and exposure to infectious materials, which is mandated by Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations.

The training records are stored in a newly developed system and unit management is required to ensure their staff complete the training. Management stated they were transitioning to the new system and overlooked the fact that three personnel had not taken the required training. Based on the nature of work conducted at the laboratory, it is critical that all personnel comply with annual safety training to ensure that they and evidence are protected. If personnel are not properly trained to safely handle hazardous materials and respond to laboratory emergencies, they could be injured and evidence could be damaged or destroyed. In addition, the laboratory risks not being in compliance with OSHA regulations.

Recommendation #2

We recommend the **Director, Forensic Laboratory Services**, direct the **Forensic Laboratory Services Safety Officer** to verify that all personnel complete required annual safety training.

5 Handbook AS-805 *Information Security*, Section 2-2.15, Installation Heads, Section 6-4.2.3, Controlled Areas, and Section 7-2.7, Implementation of Identification Badges, dated November 2019.

6 The badge used by the construction manager allowed access to the hallways outside of the forensic laboratories, maintenance rooms, and common areas, which include the inner door to the facility, main conference room, back outer door, training room, and the front outer door to the facility.

7 Limited access visitor badges are programmed to only allow access to common areas.

8 Three personnel report to other Inspection Service groups and therefore do not need to take the annual safety training.

9 In FY 2019, personnel in the digital evidence unit were required to take four safety trainings. Personnel in the other three units were required to take six safety trainings.

10 *Forensic Laboratory Services Health and Safety Manual M-6.3.01*, page 4, Responsibilities of Laboratory Safety Officer, dated January 2019.

Finding #3: Timeliness Goals

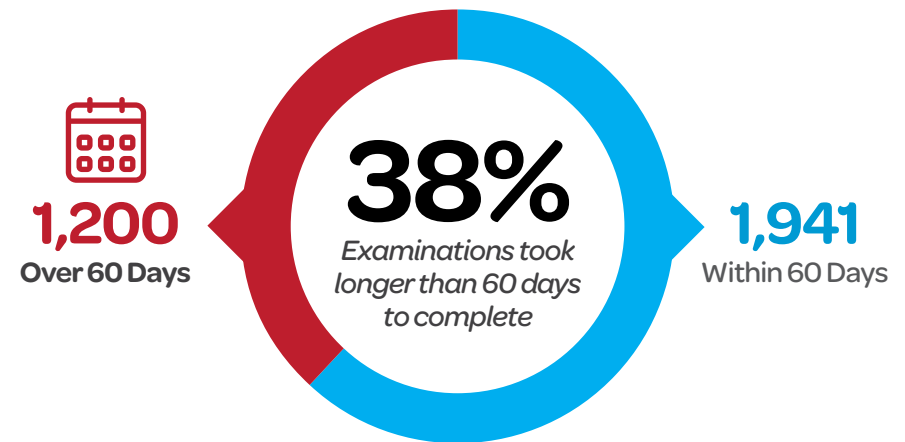
FLS has developed timeliness goals to measure its performance. The overall laboratory timeliness goal is an average of 60 days to analyze all priority types of evidence submissions and produce a summary report. However, each unit in the laboratory has a timeliness goal of an average of 30 days for evidence submissions categorized as immediate and high priority. Evidence not completed within 90 days is considered backlogged. FLS has not met its evidence submission timeliness goals since FY 2015; however, backlogged evidence was reduced in FY 2019.

During FY 2019, FLS analyzed 3,141 evidence submissions containing over 125,000 individual pieces of evidence. We found that FLS did not achieve its overall laboratory and unit-specific timeliness goals for a large percentage of evidence submissions. Specifically:

- In FY 2019, FLS took an average of 125 days to analyze all evidence submissions, regardless of priority types, which is 65 days longer than its average 60-day timeliness goal. We further analyzed the data by individual evidence submissions and found that 1,200 of 3,141 (38 percent) examinations took longer than 60 days to complete (see Figure 1). Of the 1,200 late evidence submission examinations, the Fingerprint Unit had the highest number of late examinations with 518 (43 percent), followed by the Physical Sciences Unit, the Digital Evidence Unit, and the Questioned Documents & Imaging Unit (see Figure 2). For example, one fingerprint submission took 716 days to complete.

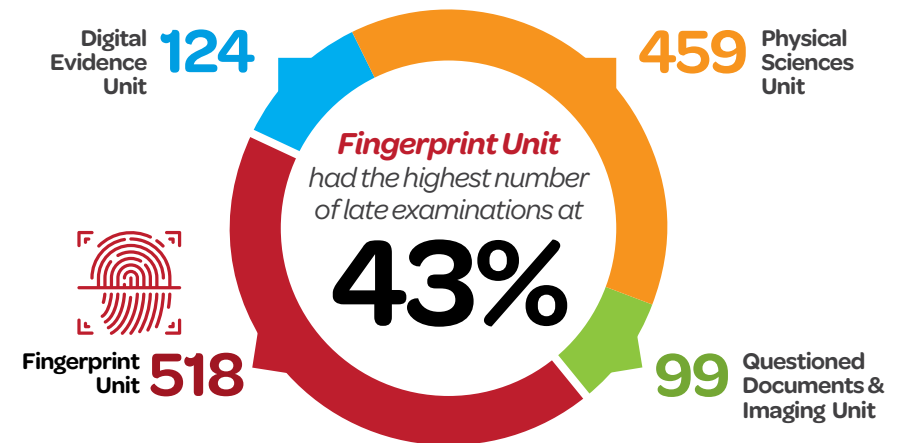
“In FY 2019, FLS took an average of 125 days to analyze all evidence submissions, regardless of priority types, which is 65 days longer than its average 60-day timeliness goal.”

Figure 1. Timeliness Results for All FY 2019 Evidence Submissions



Source: U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) analysis of FLS timeliness data.

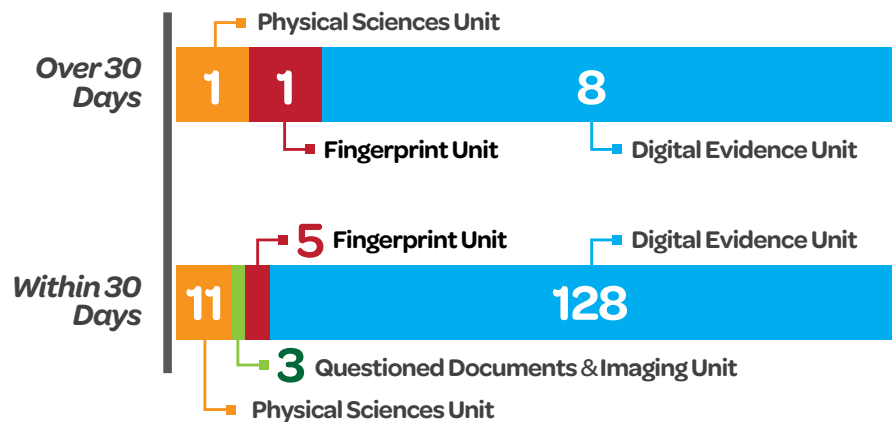
Figure 2. Late Evidence Submissions by Unit



Source: OIG analysis of FLS timeliness data.

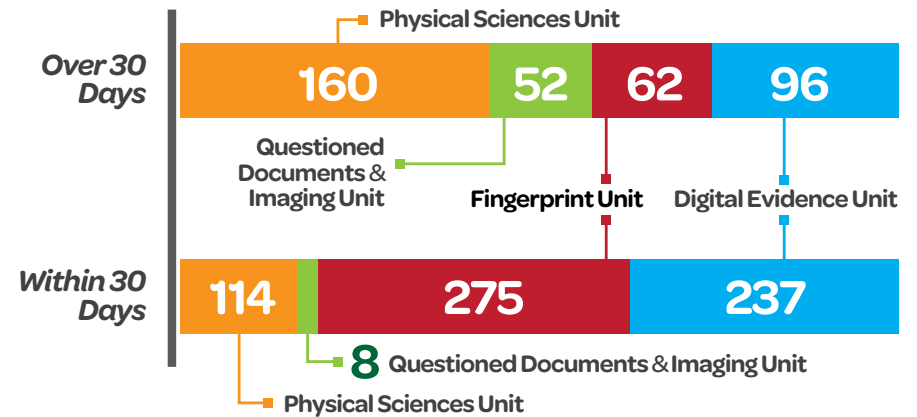
- The units within FLS took an average of 40 days to analyze immediate and high priority evidence, which is 10 days over the 30-day timeliness goal. We further analyzed the data by individual evidence submissions and determined that 380 of 1,161 (33 percent) evidence submissions categorized as immediate and high priority were not completed within 30 days. Specifically, 10 of 157 (6 percent) immediate priority evidence submissions (see Figure 3) and 370 of 1,004 (37 percent) high priority evidence submissions (see Figure 4) were not completed within 30 days. For example, one immediate priority evidence submission took 114 days to complete and one high priority evidence submission took 707 days to complete.

Figure 3. Timeliness Results for Immediate Priority Evidence Submissions



Source: OIG analysis of FLS timeliness data.

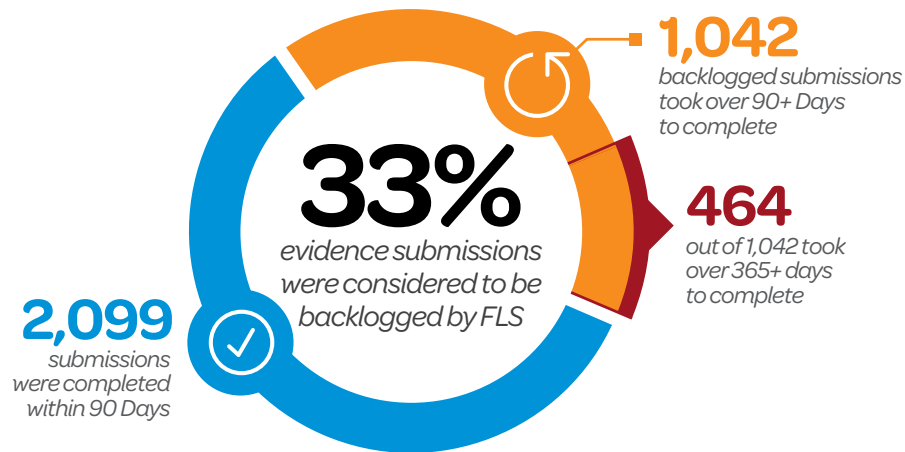
Figure 4. Timeliness Results for High Priority Evidence Submissions



Source: OIG analysis of FLS timeliness data.

- 1,042 of 3,141 (33 percent) evidence submissions were considered to be backlogged by FLS because they had not been analyzed and reported within 90 days. Of those, 464 (45 percent) examinations took over 365 days to complete (see Figure 5). One evidence submission examination took 736 days to complete.

Figure 5. Evidence Backlog



Source: OIG analysis of FLS timeliness data.

“FLS has not met its evidence submission timeliness goals since FY 2015; however, backlogged evidence was reduced in FY 2019.”

FLS was not able to meet its timeliness goals for FY 2019 because of staffing shortages. FLS is authorized 68 full-time employees but currently has 15 vacancies. FLS is working to hire qualified candidates and has also hired four contractors to work at the laboratory. Management stated that filling vacancies in the Washington, D.C. area is difficult because of the competitive job market. FLS updates its fiscal year objectives document annually to include timeliness and backlog reduction targets. However,

these documents did not contain plans to address staffing shortages. A plan should be specific, measurable, relevant, and timely. When evidence is not analyzed timely, criminal investigations or court proceedings could be negatively affected. Examinations taking longer than the overall timeliness goal of 60 days

could delay postal inspectors from identifying suspects and making arrests, allowing offenders additional opportunities to commit crimes.

Recommendation #3

We recommend the **Director, Forensic Laboratory Services**, create a plan to address staffing shortages.

Management’s Comments

Management agreed with recommendations 1 and 2 and disagreed with recommendation 3.

Regarding recommendation 1, management stated that this recommendation impacts only one layer of multiple layers of security which include secure fencing, a self-contained access control system, monitored burglar alarms, and a variety of evidence security containers. These systems are designed to ensure that access to the facility, evidence, and sensitive materials is limited and strictly controlled based on clearance, job function, and necessity. FLS management will ensure they secure all visitor badges and reinforce the Postal Service’s physical security control policy by periodically briefing all staff. The target implementation date is March 30, 2020.

Regarding recommendation 2, management stated that with the transition of the new training system, HERO, FLS was unable to verify that required training was conducted in FY 2019. This issue has been resolved and the FLS Unit will verify that all required training is conducted in FY 2020. The target implementation date is October 15, 2020.

Regarding recommendation 3, management stated that this finding was based on a review of the FLS ability to meet self-imposed timeliness goals for FY 2019. FLS continues to address their staffing requirements and has planned and used a variety of strategies to fill the highly specialized and technical laboratory positions for the past 10 years. In 2017, additional resources were added to FLS through two different contracting services and staffing and contract resources are continuously evaluated and adjusted to ensure a continued decrease in backlog submissions. The impact of these efforts was demonstrated by a reduction in backlog submissions in FYs 2018 and 2019. Since FY 2018, the backlog has

not increased and submissions older than 90 days were reduced by 40 percent. When completed submissions are averaged, the backlog submissions are included and create the false appearance that the FLS may not be addressing their staffing issues when in fact they are doing it and doing so successfully.

See [Appendix B](#) for management's comments in their entirety.

Evaluation of Management's Comments

The OIG considers management's comments responsive to recommendations 1 and 2 and corrective actions should resolve the issues identified in the report. The OIG considers management's comments unresponsive to recommendation 3.

Regarding recommendation 3, we acknowledge that FLS has hired contractors and attempted to hire more qualified candidates; however, FLS does not have a documented plan to address the vacancies totaling 22 percent of their staffing complement. A formalized and approved plan could use trend analysis to help FLS predict future workflow, allocate resources, and address timeliness

deficiencies. The OIG acknowledges that the reduction in evidence backlog from FY 2018 to FY 2019 did impact the average timeliness goals. However, 33 percent of immediate and high priority submissions during FY 2019 were not examined timely and the unit and overall laboratory timeliness goals have not been met since FY 2015. Although these goals are self-imposed, compared to industry standards they appear reasonable. Further, they can help assure stakeholders that the FLS is working to examine evidence in a timely manner. Reducing the number of vacancies would help FLS meet its timeliness goals and eliminate backlogs.

All recommendations require OIG concurrence before closure. Consequently, the OIG requests written confirmation when corrective actions are completed. The recommendations should not be closed in the Postal Service's follow-up tracking system until the OIG provides written confirmation that the recommendations can be closed.

Appendices

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Appendix A: Additional Information

Scope and Methodology

The scope of the audit was FY 2019 evidence analyzed by FLS. We selected a statistical and systematic¹¹ sample of 276 pieces of evidence in the Fingerprint, Physical Sciences, and Questioned Documents & Imaging units at the National Forensic Laboratory and reviewed all 27 pieces of evidence for one Digital Evidence Unit¹² in Dulles, VA, to determine whether tracking, packaging, and safeguarding requirements were met.

To accomplish our objective, we:

- Reviewed Postal Inspection Service policies and procedures related to the tracking, packaging, and safeguarding of evidence.
- Interviewed FLS program managers for each of the four units to understand requirements for tracking, packaging, and safeguarding evidence while it is at the lab.
- Reviewed contracts, conducted interviews, and performed timeliness analysis to determine whether contract requirements were being met.
- Conducted site visits to the National Forensic Laboratory in Dulles, VA, and the Dulles Digital Evidence Laboratory in October and November 2019 to observe incoming and outgoing evidence from postal inspectors to ensure tracking, packaging, and safeguarding requirements were met.
- Evaluated the chain of custody of evidence by observing the physical evidence at the laboratory and ensuring it matched information in the Property Evidence Acquisition Program database.
- Conducted timeliness analysis for evidence submissions by comparing the laboratory's performance data to its performance goals.
- Conducted interviews with Environmental Protection Agency OIG and the D.C. Department of Forensic Services to gain an understanding of their procedures

for packaging and safeguarding of evidence and their evidence examination timeliness metrics.

- Reviewed OSHA standards for laboratories, conducted interviews, and reviewed training documents to determine whether FLS complied with safety standards.
- Reviewed the full accreditation assessment conducted by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation in 2019 and the annual accreditation recertification reviews conducted by the American National Standards Institute National Accreditation Board in 2018 and 2019 to determine whether there have been any findings or deficiencies.
- Reviewed annual safety training records for FY 2019 to determine whether staff complied with FLS policy.
- Reviewed physical access controls at the National Forensic Laboratory to determine whether there was unauthorized access to the laboratory by obtaining the laboratory's roster and specific door access lists and comparing these against the Web Complement Information System (webCOINS) report and the laboratory's security system report.

We conducted this performance audit from September 2019 through March 2020 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We discussed our observations and conclusions with management on February 26, 2020, and included their comments where appropriate.

¹¹ Systematic sampling is a method in which a sample from a larger population is selected according to a random starting point but with a fixed interval.

¹² We reviewed 100 percent of evidence at the Dulles Digital Evidence Unit.

We assessed the reliability of FY 2019 FLS evidence and webCOINS data by tracing it to source documents for validity and completeness. We determined that the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

Prior Audit Coverage

The OIG did not identify any prior audits or reviews directly related to the objective of this audit within the last five years.

Appendix B: Management's Comments



GARY R. BARKSDALE
CHIEF POSTAL INSPECTOR

UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

March 20, 2020

LAZERICK C. POLAND
DIRECTOR, AUDIT OPERATIONS

SUBJECT: U.S. Postal Inspection Service Forensic Laboratory Services
(Report Number 19-004-DRAFT)

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the findings and recommendations contained in the draft audit report, U.S. Postal Inspection Forensic Laboratory Services.

The Postal Service agrees with recommendations 1 and 2 and disagrees with recommendation 3. Management will address each recommendation separately below.

Recommendation 1: We recommend laboratory management ensure all visitor badges at the National Forensic Laboratory are secured and reinforce the U. S. Postal Service physical security control policy by providing periodic briefings to all staff.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation; however, this recommendation impacts only one layer of multiple layers of security which includes secure fencing, a self-contained access control system, monitored burglar alarms and a variety of evidence security containers. These systems are designed to ensure that access to the facility, evidence, and sensitive materials is limited and strictly controlled based upon clearance, job function and need. FLS management will ensure all visitor badges are secured and reinforce the U. S. Postal Service physical security control policy by providing periodic briefings to all staff.

Target Implementation Date: March 30, 2020

Responsible Official: Director, Forensic Laboratory Services

Recommendation 2: We recommend the Laboratory Director direct the Laboratory Safety Officer to verify all personnel complete required annual safety training.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management agrees with this recommendation. With the transition to the new training system, HERO, the

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- 2 -

Forensic Laboratory Services was unable to verify the required training was conducted in FY2019. This issue has been resolved. The Forensic Laboratory Services Unit will verify that all required training was conducted in FY2020.

Target Implementation Date: October 15, 2020

Responsible Official: Director, Forensic Laboratory Services

Recommendation 3: We recommend the Laboratory Director create a plan to address staffing shortages.

Management Response/Action Plan: Management disagrees with this recommendation. This finding is based on a review of the Forensic Laboratory Services (FLS) ability to meet self-imposed timeliness goals for FY2019. FLS has and continues to address their staffing requirements as with any organization to fulfill the mission. FLS has planned and used a variety of strategies to fill the highly specialized and technical laboratory positions for the past ten years. In 2017, additional resources were added to FLS through two different contracting services. Staffing and contract resources are continuously evaluated and adjusted to ensure we continue to decrease the backlog of submissions while addressing the immediate needs of our organization. The impact of these efforts were demonstrated by a reduction in the backlog of submissions in FY2018 and FY2019. Since FY2018, the backlog has not increased and the submissions older than 90 days were reduced by 40 percent. An adverse result of the backlog reduction, is the negative impact on the timeliness goal. When the completed submissions are averaged, the backlog submissions are included and create the false appearance that the FLS may not be addressing their staffing issues when in fact they are and doing it successfully.

Thank you,



Gary R. Barksdale
Chief Postal Inspector

cc: *Manager, Corporate Audit Response Management*

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