

ASCLD/LAB
Inspection Report

North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation

Western Regional Laboratory
Box 15729
Asheville, North Carolina
28813

January 11-12, 1988

Inspector:
David T. Stafford

INTRODUCTION

This is a report of the site inspection of the Western Regional Laboratory of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI), located in Asheville, North Carolina.

The inspection was done by David T. Stafford, Director of the Chemical Pathology and Toxicology Laboratory of the University of Tennessee. A detailed inspection of the Laboratory was done on January 11, 12, 1988. Aspects of the management, personnel, procedures and operations relative to the ASCLD/LAB accreditation guidelines were also reviewed. This report contains the findings and recommendations of the inspector.

LABORATORY OVERVIEW

The Western Regional Laboratory is the only regional laboratory of the SBI system; the headquarters laboratory for the system is located in Raleigh, North Carolina, about 250 miles from Asheville. The Supervisor of the Asheville Laboratory reports to the Assistant Director, Laboratory Services, who reports through the Deputy Director to the Director of the SBI, who reports to the State Attorney General.

The Asheville Laboratory occupies the entire first floor of a two story modern brick building; the upper floor of which houses the Regional Field Office of the SBI. The Asheville Laboratory has been in operation for approximately 9 years, but has been in the present location for only about 15 months. The total laboratory space is approximately 5000 square feet. The Laboratory has a staff of three technical personnel, one evidence technician, and one secretary. All technical personnel are sworn agents and have attended the SBI Academy (6 months).

The Laboratory provides service in the areas of controlled substance and accelerant analyses to a population of 1.2 million in 25 counties of Western North Carolina. Asheville is nearly in the center of a right triangular area with sides approximately 190 X 100 X 215 miles, and an area of about 9500 square miles. There are no other laboratories serving the area in the analysis categories; although the Raleigh Laboratory supplies service in the other categories throughout the State, with the exception of Charlotte/Mecklenburg County which has its own laboratory.

LABORATORY MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

As a part of the State, SBI, and Laboratory Systems, the

Laboratory receives much of its direction, and many of its administrative, organizational, and management procedures from these sources; these are uniform throughout the System. There are uniform procedures for evidence handling, safety, security, use of standards and controls, maintenance and calibration of equipment, proficiency testing, record keeping and reporting. Technical procedures are primarily adapted from the Raleigh Laboratory; however, the analysts can modify, develop, or adapt other methods, if they are evaluated and approved by the Raleigh Laboratory.

Ralph V. Johanson, the Laboratory Supervisor, came to this Laboratory as a drug analyst in 1979, and has been Supervisor since 1984; prior to 1979 he had been a drug chemist with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement Laboratory since 1969. He appears to have good rapport with the staff and clients, and to have the ability necessary for a well run organization.

With the exception of those items listed below, all items in this section meet ASCLD/LAB accreditation guidelines.

11114(I), 11115(I): N/A

This Laboratory does not have a budget as such; it is included with the Raleigh Laboratory budget. There appears to be adequate funding provided for supplies, operations, and equipment.

12312(I): N/A

There are no intermediate supervisors.

13133(D): N/A

The size of the Laboratory, and the case load is such that there is little or no opportunity for exercising creative supervisory techniques. The evidence received is analysed, and this keeps everyone busy, with little time for anything else.

13333(I): No

The Library contains some journals and books, and individual collections contain additional books; however, there would be benefit to having other journals, such as the Canadian Journal of Forensic Science. Not all copies of journals received are available.

13344(I): No

There is no system as such, some journals are available if the individual chooses to read them. Copies of the table of contents of appropriate journals received by the Raleigh Laboratory are sent to Asheville.

13355(I): No

As with 13133, there is little latitude for creative supervisory techniques. Productivity in terms of case load is rather high.

Although the following were marked "yes", comments about them

are appropriate.

11210

The Laboratory Operations and Procedures were apparently just recently, 2-3 months, written and disseminated; they are being implemented, but no lengthy history or documentation of compliance or performance is available. Most of the things addressed have been policy for some time, although the recent procedures have modified some of the older policies. A sincere, substantial, and effective effort to comply is being made, and sufficient evidence is available to indicate both the intent and ability to follow these procedures.

13322(I)

The Laboratory System does not appear to have a clearly defined career development program. This Laboratory encourages attendance at meetings, additional educational, and other developmental efforts, and has been rather successful at obtaining funding for such.

14122(I)

The Laboratory does participate in proficiency testing; however, this could be increased by intrasystem, i.e., Asheville-Raleigh trade off of samples in both drug and accelerant analyses.

14244(E)

Review of reports by other than the analyst was not done until very recently. With the newly issued procedures this is required, and is being done.

Personnel Qualifications

23111(E), 23122(E), 23133(E): N/A

There are no toxicology functions at this Laboratory

24133(D), 24134(D): N/A

Probabilities are not assigned

25111(E), 25122(E), 25133(E), 25144(D), 25145(D): N/A

There are no serology functions at this Laboratory

26111(D), 26122(E), 26133(E), 26144(E), 26155(E): N/A

There are no firearm/tool mark functions at this Laboratory.

27111(D), 27122(E), 27133(E), 27144(E), 27155(E): N/A

There are no document examination functions at this Laboratory.

28111(D), 28122(E), 28133(E), 28144(D), 28155(E): N/A

There are no latent print functions at this Laboratory.

29133(E): N/A

No proficiency testing is appropriate for the evidence technician.

PROCEDURES AND INSTRUMENTS/EQUIPMENT

The Laboratory has good instrumentation and equipment, well maintained and in working order; maintenance and calibration logs were available. Procedures were adequately documented and copies were available as necessary. Funding has been allocated for, and the process initiated, to purchase a GC/MS system which is needed, and will improve the Laboratory's capabilities.

Hydrogen is being used as carrier gas in the capillary GC units, and it is recommended that an oven atmosphere monitor and safety device be installed.

PHYSICAL PLANT AND SECURITY

41177(D), 41199(D): No

There is really no area for long term storage of chemicals and supplies; however, since these are available as needed this does not appear to be a detriment.

43144(D): No

The Laboratory does not have smoke or heat detectors. It does have motion detectors.

44122(I): No

Safety devices are available; however, it is suggested that personnel be instructed in, and practice, use of fire extinguishers.

44144(I): No

Eye wash is in place; safety showerhead is ordered, but not yet in place.

44155(I): No

No spill or clean-up kits were present.

SUMMATION OF THE RATING CRITERIA

	Total Possible	Total Yes	Total No
Essential	34	34	0
Important	41	33	8
Desirable	33	31	2
Percent Essential	100%		
Percent Important	80%		
Percent Desirable	94%		

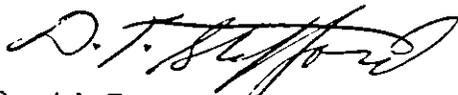
SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The inspector was favorably impressed with the Western Regional Laboratory. The management and staff exhibited willingness, concern, and the ability to provide quality service. The general attitude was professional, and interpersonal relationships appeared quite satisfactory.

From reviewing a large number of cases, all of October, 1987, it is apparent that a substantial part of the case load (perhaps 50%) consists of "junk" cases, which have essentially no potential to go to court. These are typically a "roach"; less than a gram of plant material, etc. It was suggested to the Laboratory Supervisor that he might reduce the number of insignificant cases, which require a significant proportion of time, by discussion with law enforcement officials and pointing out that these cases might be held rather than submitted, and this would increase time available for other cases, and reduce turn-around time.

As a result of the inspection on January 11, 12, 1988 it is felt that the necessary criteria have been met, and it is recommended to the ASCLD/LAB that the SBI Western Regional Laboratory receive accreditation in those disciplines in which they perform analyses.

Respectfully submitted,



David T. Stafford
January 16, 1988