



Fact Sheet



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ATF LABORATORY SERVICES

The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) Laboratory Services Division provides analytical and advisory services on scientific matters. Laboratory Services comprises four organizational groups: the Forensic Science Laboratories in Atlanta, San Francisco and Washington; and the Fire Research Laboratory. The Forensic Science Laboratory – Washington and the Fire Research Laboratory are collocated with administrative offices for Laboratory Services in suburban Maryland.

The ATF laboratories have a distinguished history that dates back to 1886. From two scientists working in the attic of the U.S. Treasury building, the operation has grown to a staff of more than 100 professionals working in four laboratories in three cities.

Staffing, Certification and Accreditation

Staffing: ATF laboratories are staffed by more than 100 personnel, including chemists, scientists, DNA analysts, engineers, fingerprint specialists, firearm and toolmark examiners, questioned document examiners and administrative support personnel.

ATF laboratory personnel hold leadership positions in numerous professional scientific organizations and are considered among the most highly qualified specialists in their fields.

Certification: ATF actively supports and encourages professional certifications for all its individual scientists and examiners. Although not every discipline in the laboratory has a certification program, where one exists, virtually all of the senior examiners have attained this important credential.

Accreditation: ATF laboratories have the distinction of being pioneers in the creation of a national program for the accreditation of forensic laboratories and were the first federal laboratories to achieve accreditation by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board (ASCLD/LAB). First accredited in 1984, ATF laboratories have maintained accreditation since.

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To maintain accreditation, ATF's laboratories undergo rigorous on-site inspections every five years. The inspections include the evaluation of all aspects of the laboratory including personnel qualifications and standards for evaluation; evidence control, security, handling and preservation techniques; instrument maintenance, calibration and use of comparison standards; and internal and external proficiency testing.

ASCLD/LAB accredits more than 300 forensic laboratories nationally and internationally.

Other Facts

In fiscal year 2007, ATF's laboratories accomplished the following:

- Processed 28 cases related to alcohol and tobacco diversion
- Processed 2,642 forensic cases
- Processed 54 fire research cases
- Provided 214 days of expert testimony in the courts
- Worked 254 days at crime scenes
- Provided 629 days of training instruction for federal, state and local investigators and examiners

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