

Corrective Action Plan Biological Specimen Storage

Incident Date: Identified September 14, 2022

Incident Type: Procedural

Incident Description: The Laboratory was running out of storage space in the refrigerators to accommodate all incoming biological specimens, and evidence was found being placed in the freezers prematurely. There is only one refrigerator, the Bio Received Fridge, designated for evidence receipt, with the remaining refrigerators used for analyzed specimens. Blood specimen analysis ceased with the Laboratory's withdrawal of its scope of accreditation in Toxicological services in March 2022. Despite no longer analyzing blood specimens, samples are still being submitted as the Laboratory is outsourcing submitted samples at the request of the District Attorney's office.

The Quality Manager noticed that after their return, outsourced specimens were being transferred to a freezer instead of remaining refrigerated. Based on questions posed to the Evidence Technician and Toxicologist, space in the Bio Received Fridge to place incoming biological evidence has been an ongoing issue. When the Evidence Technician would notice space becoming an issue, she would notify the Toxicologist. Whenever this would occur or the Toxicologist would notice that space was limited, the Toxicologist would begin the process of moving evidence around to create additional room in the Bio Received Fridge. The Toxicologist remembers initiating transfers around the beginning of May 2022. His method was taking evidence from the Bio Received Fridge and moving it to BioFridge #7 and then to BioFridge #3 before placing it in Specimen Freezer #3. After a review of specimen locations and when and where they were transferred from, it appears that the transfer of evidence began in February of 2022, with the majority of evidence being moved in May and June of 2022. It was determined that the standard operating procedure was not followed as evidence was being placed in the freezers prior to analysis, either by this Laboratory or an outsourced laboratory, and/or prior to the two year requirement following analysis. Laboratory practice consisted of any Laboratory employee transferring evidence when space became an issue, the transfer of which may or may not be communicated between Laboratory personnel.

LOG-25-05 Evidence Control

4.5.4 All biological specimens shall be stored in the refrigerator upon receipt. It shall remain refrigerated until it is analyzed. (NOTE: refrigerator temperatures should be kept at or near 4 degrees Celsius.) After analysis, the item shall be stored in a refrigerator for a minimum of two years. Afterwards, it may be stored in a room-temperature location, or in a freezer for cases requiring a longer retention.

Corrective Action Plan Biological Specimen Storage

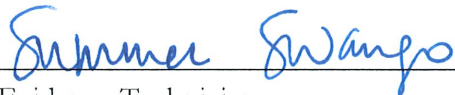
Proposed Corrective Action(s):

1. Change the standard operating procedure (SOP) to allow for a shorter refrigeration period following analysis.
2. Move all specimens to the appropriate location based on the revised SOP.
3. Facilitate more frequent communication between Laboratory personnel.
4. Create a secondary receiving refrigerator, if space allows.
5. Designate an individual to maintain the refrigerators and freezers, which includes but is not limited to moving evidence to the appropriate location when necessary and attempting to maintain evidence in numerical order as best as possible.

Timeframe for Corrective Action(s): two weeks

Comment(s): While the standard operating procedure was not followed, freezing samples prior to analysis does not harm the sample – it further preserves it. The only deterrent to placing samples in a freezer is that the blood vial(s) may break when brought to room temperature for analysis.

The Laboratory rescinded its scope of accreditation in Toxicological services in March 2022. Blood alcohol and blood drug analysis came to a halt but submissions were still being accepted. Urine analysis continued for employment and incidental Sheriff Office departmental purposes. The Crime Laboratory was not previously and is not currently accredited in urine analysis.



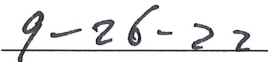
Evidence Technician



Date



Applicable Analyst / Discipline



Date



Lab Quality Manager



Date



Laboratory Director



Date