


FORENSIC SCIENCE DIVISION


Labyrinth – Quarterly Newsletter

2nd Quarter 2025





Biology

 Please only use Bluestar if potential blood staining is NOT visible. If an item is sprayed with Bluestar, it is imperative that you circle the area(s) that fluoresce. Otherwise we will have no way to know where to swab.


 Amy Howls and Emily Tuck have completed the interpretation portion of their training! They are continuing with the labwork segment of their DNA analyst training and we hope to have them fully online this fall.


Evidence

 Please make sure you remove and keep the agency's copy of the sex kit forms before submitting kits.


 Please double check that seals are intact, initialed, and dated before submission. As kit seals break easily during transit, evidence tape seals can be reinforced with clear tape.


Latent Prints

 If submitting an item to be analyzed by Chemistry and Latent Prints, please separate the suspected substance from the packaging prior to submitting it to the laboratory. We will return items without analyzing them until the suspected substance has been removed.

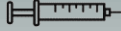
 If you have a case going to trial, please let the laboratory know as soon as possible so that any opened requests can be worked prior to the trial.

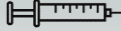
Toxicology

 The Breath Alcohol section will be providing training at MLEA and in Boulder. They are also planning an internal study regarding the effects of permanent retainers on breath testing.


 We are welcoming two staff members: Delaney Peterson and Ollie Robson. Delaney has started her training program, and Ollie will hopefully be joining us in the next few months to start training. We are happy to have them on board!


Chemistry

 All glass items, whether broken prior to submission or not, need to be submitted in a box.


 We have had three confirmed cases of carfentanil in the last six months, all blue M30 tablets or blue tablet pieces.


Firearms

 Lynette Lancon was elected as AFTE's (Association of Firearm and Toolmark Examiner) Membership Secretary and promoted to Distinguished Member of the association at the Anaheim meeting this year.

 Doug and Lynette Lancon published a case study in the latest Journal of AFTE: Trigger Malfunction in a Stag Arms Stag-15 Model Rifle - A Reminder About Safety Precautions. AFTE Journal Vol 56 No 2 (2024), p250-252.

Miscellaneous

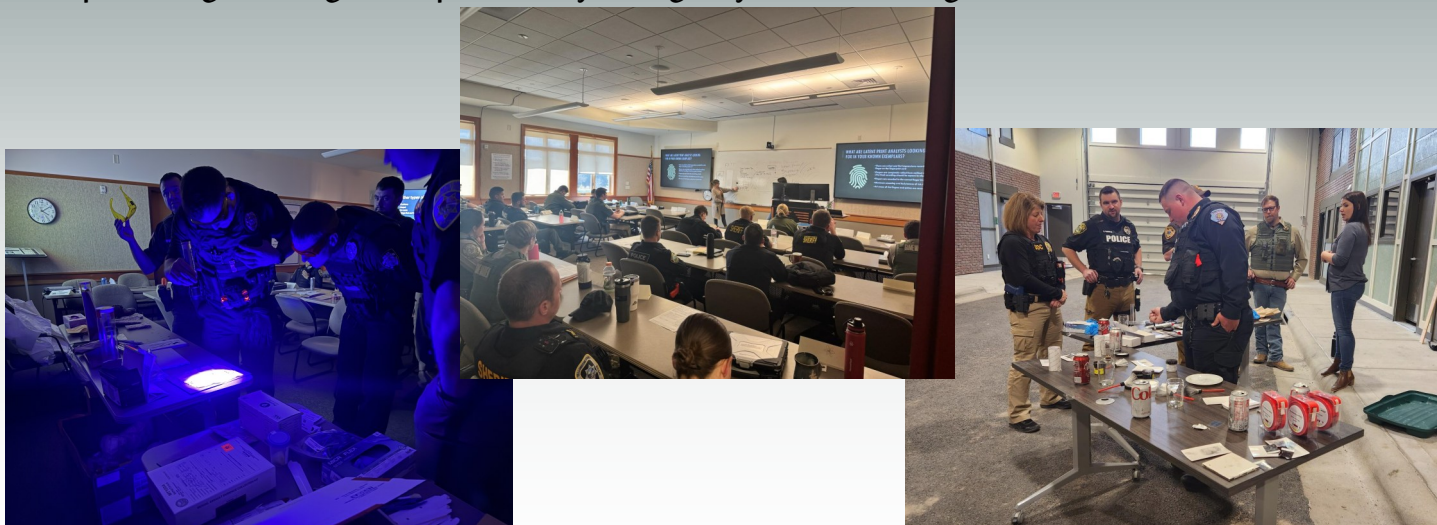
 Please put the direct phone number/email of the officer in charge on the submission forms, not general information or the evidence technician. If there are questions about the case or evidence submitted, we need to be able to contact the correct person.

 The Evidence Handling Manual has been updated online. It can be viewed at <https://dojmt.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/MT-FSD-Evidence-Manual-May-2025.pdf>

Labyrinth – continued

MLEA Training

The Crime Lab went to MLEA in April to provide hands-on training. Subjects included DNA evidence and reference standard collection, powder and lift latent impressions, known finger and palm impressions, and extracting bullet fragments. We have also formed an Outreach Committee to start providing training and updates to your agency in the coming months.



Employee Spotlight



Kristy Burkhart is one of our hard-working Autopsy Assistants at the Missoula lab. Originally from Rutland, Vermont, Kristy moved to Missoula to pursue a Bachelor's in Forensic Anthropology and a minor Sociology with a focus in Criminology from the University of Montana. She met her husband in 2012, and they have a seven year old daughter. Before joining the Crime Lab in 2023, Kristy spent six years as a Corporal in the Missoula County Jail's Juvenile Detention Unit. Kristy loves spending time outdoors hunting, fishing, camping, and boating. She has five horses, 2 dogs, a cat, and chickens. Kristy is a vital member of the Medical Examiner's team, performing a physically and mentally demanding job. She is amazing and very much appreciated!

Forensic Science Division
PO Box 16170
2679 Palmer Street
Missoula, MT 59808
(406)728-4970

Forensic Science Division - East
1516 4th Avenue North, Suite 1
Billings, MT 59101
(406)255-1101

Website: <https://dojmt.gov/forensic-science-division/>

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