



HFSC completes accreditation assessment of facility following move

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Houston Forensic Science Center has successfully completed an evaluation of its new facility after an on-site assessment that reviewed and approved steps it had taken to ensure the validity and integrity of its methods during a recent laboratory move.

The assessment Monday focused primarily on security, evidence handling, instrument performance and documentation surrounding the move completed in mid-November. The assessment is required under HFSC's accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025:2017.

HFSC's accrediting body, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) National Accreditation Board, will have to approve the outcome of the onsite assessment, the last official stamp of approval surrounding the year-long facility move.

"Moving a forensic laboratory is a complex process that requires attention to detail and a focus on ensuring equipment, evidence and instruments remain operable," said Dr. Peter Stout, HFSC's CEO and president.

"While we are pleased the assessment has been successfully completed, we know we must always be vigilant and cannot be complacent about our performance," he added.

Chris Heartsill, the lead assessor, praised HFSC not only for successfully completing the move, but also for Houston's progress from once being called "the worst" crime laboratory in the nation to becoming today one of the best.

"For anybody who's been in Texas or Houston for some time, you know where you are compared to where you've been," Mr. Heartsill said. "It's really an astounding feat."

HFSC's quality division director, Erika Ziemak, and her staff helped document the steps taken to ensure evidence integrity and instrument performance before, during and after the move.

"We took all necessary precautions to preserve the integrity of our processes and evidence," Ms. Ziemak said. "We always value the perspective provided by an external party. It's reassuring to know the assessor has found our laboratory is functioning as needed."

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC operates in seven forensic disciplines.

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