



# ASCLD/LAB NEWSLETTER

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors  
Laboratory Accreditation Board

## EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

During the past few months ASCLD/LAB has been searching for an individual to serve as the Executive Assistant for the association. The position of Chairman of the Board and Executive Secretary has become so time consuming that the Board felt it was necessary to hire someone full time. We were very fortunate to have several outstanding candidates apply. After much deliberation and numerous interviews we have chosen Ralph "Bud" Keaton for the position. Bud has been an active member of ASCLD/LAB and ASCLD since the creation of these organizations. He has served as Chairman of the Board and as an inspector for ASCLD/LAB and on the Board of ASCLD. Bud recently retired from the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation after 30 years of service. The Board Members are looking forward to working with Bud in his new capacity.

As of September 1 ASCLD/LAB will have a phone number and fax line. If you need to reach Bud Keaton or have a general question or just aren't sure who on the Board can answer your question call voice number 919-773-2600 or fax number 919-773-2602.

## NATIONAL FORENSIC SCIENCE TRAINING

The Board of ASCLD has decided to continue with the development of the

National Forensic Science Training Center in Largo, Florida. It is hoped that the Center will develop into a major Center for training in forensic science and include a variety of other functions. A of services and functions were offered to ASCLD/LAB, including space, if we would consider locating our Assistant in Largo at the Center. At our June meeting the ASCLD/LAB Board agreed to locate our Executive Assistant in Largo within a year after the establishment of the Center.

## CONFIDENTIAL AGREEMENT

A few weeks ago all inspectors should have received a confidentiality statement in the mail which you have returned to Manuel Valadez. It is hoped that the signing of these statements will serve as a reminder that all findings during an inspection, the inspection results, the reviews of the Annual Accreditation Review Reports, the reviews by the Proficiency Review Committees, the discussions by the Board and other matters directly related to the accreditation of a laboratory confidential and should not be revealed except to those with a "need to know". Those with a "need to know" would include the laboratory's director, members of the ASCLD/LAB Board, and the Executive Assistant.

## CANDIDATES FOR THE BOARD

At the Delegate Assembly Meeting in

September an election will be held to fill three seats on the Board. The terms of Paul Ferrara and Mike Galco will be ending and Bud Keaton is retiring. The following individuals have agreed to be candidates:

Kenneth Betz, Director, Miami Valley Regional Crime Laboratory, Dayton, Ohio

William Hartner, Commander Laboratory Director, Metro-Dade Police Dept, Miami, Florida

Dale Heideman, System Director, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Tallahassee, Florida

Edward Hueske, Laboratory Manager, Arizona Department of Public Safety, Flagstaff, Arizona

Benjamin Perillo, Laboratory Director, DEA Special Testing and Research Lab, McLean, Virginia

Bradford Telyea, Forensic Laboratory Director, Oregon State Police, Portland, Oregon.

## SYSTEM CERTIFICATE

ASCLD/LAB accredits laboratories-not systems. However, in numerous laboratory systems all of the laboratories are accredited. At the request of several Delegate Assembly members the Board has approved the issuance of a certificate suitable for display in the central or headquarters

office of a system. The certificate will state that the laboratories of the system are accredited. Anyone interested in obtaining such a certificate for their system should contact Manuel Valadez by letter.

### REACCREDITATION AND DELEGATE ASSEMBLY MEMBERSHIP

Because of a number of factors there is often a lapse of time between the date of expiration of current accreditation and the date of board action granting reaccreditation. If the application for reaccreditation is received prior to the expiration date of the current accreditation a Laboratory remains accredited until the Board takes action on granting reaccreditation. A laboratory that does not apply for reaccreditation before the expiration date will relinquish its membership into the delegate assembly. The delegate assembly member will be reinstated when board action approves reaccreditation.

### PROFICIENCY REVIEW COMMITTEES

Proficiency Review Committees (PRC's) are now established in all of the fields in which ASCLD/LAB grants accreditation. The programs have been completed and approved by the Board for DNA, Controlled Substances and Firearms/Toolmarks. These Committees will be reviewing the results of proficiency tests of accredited laboratories provided by approved test providers.

ASCLD/LAB requirements include:

- Each examiner must complete at least one proficiency test annually for each discipline (two for DNA).
- A laboratory must

participate annually in at least one external proficiency test for each discipline in which it provides services.

- The laboratory must complete a formal agreement with the test provider permitting the release of the laboratory's test results directly to ASCLD/LAB.

Only the DNA PRC has announced the names of the approved test providers - SERI, Cellmark, CTS and CAP. Additional approved test providers will be announced as soon as they are reviewed by the Committees and approved by the Board.

In order to avoid conflict of interest issues, members of the PRC's shall not have a relationship with any test provider that would imply a compromise in the standards and requirements of ASCLD/LAB for such providers. PRC members shall not have any monetary connection or advisory relationship with test providers except in the capacity of representing the PRC itself.

Any questions about the PRCs can be directed to Judy Brummond who has done an excellent job of coordinating the Committees.

### INSPECTIONS INSPECTION REPORTS

#### Compliance

During the course of an inspection there are sometimes criteria for which the inspectors question compliance. Evaluation criteria are either met, not met or not applicable; they are marked "yes", "no", or "not applicable". Inspectors should grade conservatively. If an evaluation is found to be borderline, it should be graded "NO".

It is the proper function of the Board to make the decision if there is any question about a particular criterion. According to the Manual "...any criterion for which there is some question of compliance will be noted by the inspection team as a deficiency with an explanatory note." In other words, answered "NO, however...." For example:

**1.4.2.7 (E) ARE WRITTEN TECHNICAL PROCEDURES AVAILABLE TO THE ANALYSTS AND FOR REVIEW?** In a recent inspection this question was answered "yes" by the team with the comment: "While each analyst appear's to have their own technical procedures available, the inspection team recommends that each section chief prepare a compilation of common technical procedures.

The Board felt that the inspection team had some doubt that each analyst had complete, similar technical procedures. This question should have been answered "NO" and an explanation of the existence of individuals notes and a statement whether or not they were discussed with each examiner to determine if each examiner had complete procedures. Review of the manual indicates that "The laboratory must maintain written copies of appropriate technical procedures".

#### Personnel Interviews

Arguably, the two most important parts of the accreditation inspection are first, the review of case files and secondly, the interviews with the laboratory personnel. In regard to the latter, the following questions are suggested (the origin of the list is a little obscure, but it may have started with Eldon Straughan):

- what areas are you qualified in?

what is your background and training?

- what are some of the laboratory's objectives?
- have you completed proficiency testing? when? in what areas?
- do you have an evidence storage locker?
- does anyone else have access to your storage locker? how do you get your evidence?
- where are your standards or controls stored?
- do you mark all evidence that you examine?
- if you were the last one to leave the laboratory tonight or open in the morning, what procedure would you use to secure or open the building?
- when was the last time your court testimony was monitored? when was the last professional meeting you attended?
- when was the last time you read a professional article?
- what procedure(s) do you use to examine/compare (hairs, questioned documents, latent fingerprints, or other evidence)? what equipment is used? why?
- when was the last maintenance performed on \_\_\_\_\_?
- does this instrument have to be calibrated? is there a record of the calibration?

inspect the calibration record.

- where is the nearest fire extinguisher?
- where is the nearest spill kit! first aid kit? are any carcinogens used in this section?
- what precautions are taken when they are used?
- which way would you go if the fire alarm went off right now? how many supervisors do you report to?
- what procedure would you follow if you had a grievance against a supervisor?
- when was the last staff meeting you attended?
- who reviews your reports?
- are there written procedures for examinations you conduct?
- where is evidence placed that must be stored long term?
- have you read the MSDS's for chemicals used in your area?

#### **Return Visits by Inspectors**

Lab Directors should remember that if the inspectors find discrepancies that are major enough to require a return visit, that visit will be at the expense of the laboratory. Two inspectors are normally required.

#### **Documentation**

The importance of complete documentation cannot be stressed enough. Written records must be

present to indicate the chain of custody, testing of reagents for reliability, calibration of instruments, monitoring of testimony of examiners, proficiency tests, examination results and the numerous other aspects of the day to day operation of a laboratory. The Inspection Manual makes numerous references to "written" records. These records must be complete and up-to-date; the Board often has to ask a Team Leader to return to a lab to verify that written records are being maintained. The Board routinely asks that records be kept for 3 months before asking for a return visit by an inspector.

#### **Pre-distribution Testing**

Examiners in ASCLD/LAB accredited laboratories often examine proficiency tests prior to distribution to the other participating laboratories. A pre-distribution testing laboratory will be considered to have completed a proficiency tested provided the manufacturer's expected conclusions were unknown to the laboratory at the time of the testing

#### **DELEGATE ASSEMBLY**

The Delegate Assembly will be meeting on Wednesday evening, September 27 at the FBI Academy in Quantico during the annual Symposium on Crime Laboratory Development sponsored by the FBI and ASCLD. All Delegate Assembly members should plan to attend!

#### **WE NEED YOUR INPUT!!!!**

At each meeting the Board of Directors is asked to consider a variety of issues. Since the Delegate Assembly meets only once a year the numerous mailings and this Newsletter are our only ways to insure that all inspectors and Delegate Assembly members know what is before the Board. Some of the issues that have recently been brought before the Board and for which we

solicit your thoughts and opinions include:

- including Crime Scene Examiners in the accreditation process
- the "paperless" laboratory. How will the use of computers for everything from instruction manuals to reports to chain of custody affect the accreditation process?
- should we change our name to reflect our growing international involvement

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Paul Ferrara, Ph.D., Chairman  
Virginia Division of Forensic Science

Manuel Valadez, Jr., Executive Secretary  
Texas DPS Crime Laboratory

Michael Galco  
Illinois Forensic Laboratory

Anthony Longhetti (Public Member)  
Cal. State University, Los Angeles

Vincent Crispino  
Suffolk County Crime Laboratory,  
New York

Jo Ann Given  
Naval Criminal Investigative Service  
Forensic Laboratory

Judy Brummond  
Washington State Patrol

Ralph Keaton  
NC State Bureau of Investigation

Helen Fahey, representing law  
enforcement/prosecuting attorneys  
US Attorney, Alexandria, Va.

Mark Dale, Ex-Oficio  
New York State Police