



**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
POLICIES & PROCEDURES**



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| Subject: Handling of Potentially Dangerous Drug Evidence | | Policy Number: OPR: 67 |
| Revision Number: 1 | Effective Date: 11/28/2023 | Original Issue Date: 10/07/2021 |

1) PURPOSE

- a) The purpose of this policy is to provide commissioned personnel of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety with guidelines and procedures for field testing of unknown substances.

2) POLICY

- a) It is the policy of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety personnel to no longer conduct field testing on any unknown drugs in powder, liquid, or pill form unless they meet the safety procedures outlined in this policy. Personnel shall use their training and experience to clearly detail in their report the suspected substance and substantiate any corresponding criminal charges. If confirmation is necessary, chemical testing should be performed by the Forensics Laboratory. Whenever available, the substance should be tested utilizing the TruNarc or other similar departmental approved devices. However, TruNarc is not a substitute for forensic lab testing. The TruNarc will only be utilized for presumptive testing. (Refer to the TruNarc Procedures Document attached to this policy).

3) APPLICABILITY

- a) This policy applies to all commissioned New Mexico State Police personnel of the New Mexico Department of Public Safety.

4) REFERENCES

- a) U.S. Department of Justice DEA – Fentanyl A Brief Guide for First Responders

5) DEFINITIONS

- a) **Fentanyl** – a fast-acting narcotic analgesic and sedative that is sometimes abused for its heroin-like effect.

6) OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES

- (1) Identification of testing site



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- (a) The location of the field test shall be an environment where the airflow is controlled and stagnant, and
 - (i) within a location already contaminated, such as a search warrant scene, or
 - (ii) at a designated non-porous surface at the worksite.
 - (b) Testing of unknown substances shall NOT be conducted in a patrol car or vehicle, outdoors, a worksite break area, or a working desk area.
 - (c) Prior to removing PPE, the designated work surface shall be wiped down with a wet paper towel to prevent any particulate matter that may be present from becoming airborne. alcohol or bleach-based wipes shall not be used.
 - (d) When removing PPE, special concern should be taken to prevent unintended cross-contamination.
 - (e) Used PPE and trash shall be disposed of utilizing a plastic trash liner that should be tied off after use to prevent another person from accidental exposure to the possible hazardous contents.
- (2) Handling of the evidence
- (a) Assume all liquid, pills or powdered drugs may contain potentially unknown dangerous substances and/or its analogs.
 - (b) Minimize exposure by covering bare skin. Avoid actions that may cause the powder to become airborne.
 - (c) Use Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), even if items are packaged. This includes the following:
 - (i) Disposable nitrile gloves, which should be worn at all times. Officers should wear double gloves.
 - (ii) Disposable masks or respirators
 - (iii) Eye protection
 - (d) Ensure naloxone (NARCAN) is immediately available for use during the handling of potentially dangerous drugs or going into a situation where an officer may encounter dangerous drugs (e.g., search warrant, vehicle search). The best practice would be to have NARCAN in the officer's possession and in multiple doses. Refer to OPR: 46 NALOXONE for further explanation.
 - (e) Handle potentially dangerous drugs with an observer present at a safe distance with NARCAN immediately available. If an observer is



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unavailable, the officer shall notify someone to ensure the officer's safety is monitored.

- (f) All efforts should be made to immediately package and seal the potentially dangerous substance.
 - (g) Drug evidence of an unknown type or evidence that is believed to contain dangerous unknown substances shall be double-bagged and clearly labeled that it may contain a dangerous substance.
 - (h) Any disposable gear used during the collection of evidence should be removed carefully, sealed in a bag, and disposed of properly. Any contaminated uniforms and gear should be decontaminated.
 - (i) All members should wash their hands and exposed work environment with soap and water immediately after searching for and handling drug evidence. Do not use hand sanitizers.
 - (j) Canine handlers should use safety precautions when deploying a canine to conduct searches, particularly, preventing the canine from puncturing packages.
- (3) Testing of Unknown Substances
- (a) If officers have access to a TruNarc, or other departmental testing devices, which allows presumptive testing while keeping the evidence packaged, then they may conduct testing.
 - (b) The safety procedures outlined in Section A, will be followed when testing is conducted.
- (4) Dangerous or unknown substance exposure
- (a) If any person is exposed to a dangerous unknown substance do the following:
 - (i) In all circumstances, seek immediate emergency medical attention.
 - (ii) Do not touch your eyes, mouth, nose, or any skin after touching any potentially contaminated area.
 - (iii) If ingested and the exposed person is conscious, wash out mouth with water.
 - (iv) If exposed to skin, wash immediately with soap and cool water. Do not use hand sanitizers as they will increase the absorption of the potentially dangerous substance.
 - (v) Wash your hands thoroughly after the incident and before eating, drinking, smoking, or using the restroom.



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- (5) While conducting a criminal investigation, if the officer encounters unknown drugs in powder form, which are unpackaged and cannot be handled safely the following procedures shall be followed:
- (a) Commissioned personnel will contact the on-duty/on-call Crime Suppression Unit supervisor for disposition.
 - (b) If requested or required, the on-call Crime Suppression supervisor will contact the Meth Lab Team Commander and notify the local communication center.
 - (c) To perform field testing of the substance, the Meth Lab Team Commander will coordinate a Meth Lab Team member to respond.
 - (i) Location of testing will be determined by the Meth Lab Team member.
 - (ii) Meth Lab Team member will provide all equipment and protective gear necessary for evidence collection and disposal.
 - (d) Following the Meth Lab Team assistance, the initial investigating member shall process the substance for further laboratory testing, in accordance with OPR: 17 Evidence/Property Handling, and transfer to the evidence.
 - (i) If, after testing, the Meth Lab Team member believes that the substance is volatile or dangerous to others, the Meth Lab Team member will securely package the substance.
 - 1) Meth Lab Team member will advise on any additional precautions to be taken by any individual handling or transporting the substance.
 - (ii) If necessary, the investigating officer should advise the forensic laboratory that rush processing is necessary.
- (6) Administrative Procedures
- (a) If a Meth Lab Team member responds to an incident, the assigned member shall complete all required paperwork related to the incident, and forward appropriately.
 - (b) Investigating officer will request all associated paperwork from Meth Lab Team member, if necessary, to be included in the case report file.

7) ATTACHMENTS

a) TruNarc Procedural Document



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8) APPROVAL

APPROVED BY: W. J. Laird DATE: 11/28/23
New Mexico State Police Chief

