

OVERVIEW

The Controlled Substances Section (CSS) is a division of the Phoenix Police Department Laboratory Services Bureau (LSB). At capacity, the CSS consists of twelve (12) positions. The CSS team works together to fulfill its mission and maintain the highest quality forensic services. The mission of the CSS is to provide drug analysis through the application of current forensic techniques, to maintain excellence in forensic science, and to assist the criminal justice community in the pursuit of making Phoenix the safest major city.

SERVICES PROVIDED

Drug Analysis

The CSS is responsible for analyzing a wide variety of drug evidence, such as marijuana, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, diverted prescription drugs, and steroids. A number of techniques are utilized when identifying controlled substances, such as chemical color tests, crystal tests, thin layer chromatography, microscopy, and instrumental analysis.



Heroin Bundle



Instrument Room



Positive Color Test for Marijuana

Sampling of Bulk Evidence

Occasionally, the analysts may be called out of the laboratory for on-site assistance with large seizures of controlled substances. This happens most frequently with large marijuana and cocaine cases. In those instances, the analyst will obtain a representative core sample from each bale of marijuana or brick of cocaine for testing. By obtaining core samples, the lab is able to identify the contents of each bale or brick without having to store the entire seizure. The CSS's largest marijuana seizure case weighed over 7,200 pounds!



Numerous Marijuana Bales



Several Cocaine Bricks

Controlled Substances Officer (CSO) Training

To prevent a further backlog of cases and to assist with the current backlog, a number of sworn police officers participate in the Controlled Substances Field Identification Program and are certified as Controlled Substances Officers (CSOs). The program includes a 16-hour class and a 4-hour annual recertification class taught by the CSS. Officers are trained in the presumptive identification of four controlled substance types using color indicator tests. These tests allow for rapid results from which charges can be filed based on the officer's field identification. Should the case proceed to trial, a full analysis of the substance is conducted by the CSS to confirm the officer's identification. There are approximately 300 CSOs in the program.



Positive Field Test for Methamphetamine

Report Writing and Expert Testimony

The analysts are responsible for producing a written report of their results in the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS). In the event that a case goes to trial, an analyst may be subpoenaed to testify as an expert witness in city, county, or federal court. On average, each CSS scientist testifies once per month.