

# HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## News Release



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### **Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Crime Lab** **uses \$1-million in federal stimulus funds to create new DNA program**

**April 15, 2009 (MINNEAPOLIS)** – The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Crime Lab is using a \$1,133,972 federal stimulus grant to fund a new effort to investigate property crimes throughout the county. The awards will nearly double the number of employees assigned to DNA testing at the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab.

With the stimulus funding, the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab launched a new program called, the DNA Property Crime Initiative.

"Most law enforcement agencies nationwide continue to run DNA on only the most serious violent crimes," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek, "The Sheriff's Office Crime Lab also uses DNA for property crime investigations because we know that when we reduce property crime in our community, it leads to a reduction in violent crime as well."

Currently, the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab provides forensic services to 32 suburban law enforcement agencies in Hennepin County and other agencies. An increasing number of police departments in suburban communities are requesting DNA analysis to help solve property crimes – such as burglary, theft, and damage to property.

Although the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab has always placed a strong emphasis on property crime investigations, the laboratory had lacked the capacity and staffing to address the increasing backlog of casework. This grant will greatly improve the lab's capacity to handle DNA cases related to property crimes.

The stimulus grant provides funding for seven laboratory employees to address the growing demand for DNA analysis. The lab's goal is to increase DNA casework capacity by approximately 40% and to greatly reduce the amount of time that it takes to complete DNA analysis. The goal is to reduce turnaround time by half.

The federal funding that the Sheriff's Office is receiving is awarded from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act: Edward Byrne Memorial Competitive Grant Program.

The grant for the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab will provide funding for two years for the following Sheriff's Office employees:

- \* 3 new DNA Analysts
- \* 2 new Biology Screeners
- \* 1 new clerical support employee
- \* 1 new Evidence Specialist

The Hennepin County Board provided approximately \$400,000 to remodel a portion of the crime lab to create additional space for more DNA work.

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