

# HENNEPIN COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

## News Release



Media Contact:  
Lisa Kiava  
(612) 919-5918

### **\$1-million in federal stimulus funds is awarded to Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Crime Lab**

**September 16, 2009 (MINNEAPOLIS)** – The Hennepin County Sheriff's Office Crime Lab has been awarded a \$1,133,972 grant from the federal stimulus program. The award will nearly double the number of employees assigned to DNA testing at the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab.

"DNA testing is the most significant breakthrough in crime-fighting technology in the past several decades," said Hennepin County Sheriff Rich Stanek, "The Sheriff's Office Crime Lab will greatly increase its ability to use this incredibly powerful tool to enhance public safety throughout the county."

The grant will allow for the hiring of seven new 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.

Because of the current backlog in cases, the turnaround time for DNA analysis is approximately two months -- in cases involving violent crime. The turnaround time for DNA analysis is approximately six months -- for property crime cases. The goal is to reduce turnaround time by half for both categories of DNA analysis.

The stimulus funding will allow the Sheriff's Office Crime Lab to launch a new program called, the DNA Property Crime Initiative. 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 currently places a strong emphasis on property crime investigations, the laboratory lacks 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.

"People who commit property crimes typically commit more than one-- and they often move on to committing more violent crime," said Sheriff Stanek, "That's why solving property crimes also reduces violent crime and improves quality of life in our neighborhoods."

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. There were 3500 applicants from across the country that competed for the program's \$125-million in federal funding. To date, three awards have been announced in Minnesota.

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

In June, the Hennepin County Board approved \$420,000 to remodel a portion of the crime lab to create additional space for more DNA work. The work could be complete by late fall.

The Sheriff's Office Crime Lab is located in downtown Minneapolis and it is one of only three accredited crime labs in Minnesota.

For media inquiries, contact PIO Lisa Kiava at 612-919-5918 and [lisa.kiava@co.hennepin.mn.us](mailto:lisa.kiava@co.hennepin.mn.us)