



CLASS SPECIFICATION

Class Code: 60002259
Date Established: 10/2001
Last Reviewed: 08/2024
Last Revised: 08/2024
Last Title Change:
FLSA: non-exempt
Probation: 12 months

CRIMINALIST I

DEFINITION

Under general supervision, performs a broad range of professional laboratory analysis of physical evidence in a general or specialized field of Criminalistics; interprets results of chemical and biological tests; performs crime/death scene investigation for the Washoe County Sheriff's Office Forensic Science Division; and performs related work as required.

EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a natural science, physical science, forensic science or closely related field which included natural or physical science coursework AND two years of full-time experience in applying scientific techniques in a laboratory related to one of the relevant fields. A master's or higher-level degree in one of the relevant fields may substitute for half of the required experience.

LICENSE OR CERTIFICATE

A valid driver's license is required at the time of appointment and must be maintained for continuous employment.

May require licenses and/or certification as required by specific assignment (see SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS).

DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERISTICS

This is the second level in the Criminalist job class series and provides for progression to the next level in the series upon meeting the requirements of the class and recommendation of the appointment authority. It is distinguished from the Criminalist Trainee in that incumbents are expected to perform a wider range of professional laboratory analysis of physical evidence in a general or specialized field of Criminalistics under less supervision. It is distinguished from the Criminalist II by the fact that incumbents in the Criminalist I class are not performing full journey level assignments and work assignments are reviewed more frequently.

SUPERVISION EXERCISED

Exercises no supervision.

EXAMPLES OF DUTIES *(The following is used as a partial description and is not restrictive as to duties required.)*

Maintain and operate equipment required for casework. Perform routine maintenance and quality assurance checks of laboratory equipment and instrumentation.

Evaluate information received from investigating agencies to determine the appropriate test or calibration methods needed for the examination of evidence.

Perform detailed investigations in conjunction with law enforcement agencies regarding a wide variety of crimes, to include crime/death scene investigations. Work includes examinations for the presence of evidence such as: biological fluids (i.e., blood, etc.), hairs/fibers, control substance, latent prints, gunshot residue (GSR), shoe and tire impressions, firearms/weapons, clothing, etc., and maintain accurate documentation of observations and actions taken.

Perform forensic analysis, such as latent print, toxicology, firearm, controlled substances, DNA, etc., on submitted evidence following laboratory policies and procedures.

Prepare reagents, solutions, standards and controls using laboratory procedures and practices.

Operate and maintain specialized instrument software and computer applications.

Collect, receive, preserve, and handle physical evidence such as biological samples, impressions, firearms, clothing, controlled substances, etc. Implement evidence control, maintain chain of custody, and preserve the integrity of evidence while in the custody of the division.

Document and photograph crime scenes, victims, and arrestees if assigned to the Forensic Investigation Section.

Assist with technical information for ongoing development and improvements to laboratory training and procedure manuals.

Maintain accurate examination records for the analysis of evidence to support written reports. Document findings and conclusions in written reports.

Testify in court as an expert witness.

Provide training for local and regional law enforcement agencies and members of the judicial system.

Assist with new method validations.

Assist with the training and development of new staff.

Participate in the Divisions Quality Assurance program to ensure the laboratory work meets accreditation standards set by professional forensic science laboratory associations and accrediting bodies.

JOB RELATED AND ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS

Full Performance *(These may be acquired on the job and are needed to perform the work assigned.)*

Knowledge of:

Washoe County policies and procedures.

Department/division policies and procedures related to area of assignment.

New and emerging scientific and laboratory techniques related to forensic science.

Accreditation standards, quality assurance program, and quality control methods and principles used within forensic science.

State and federal laws related to evidence, forensic science, and expert witness testimony.

Ability to:

Identify improvements; plan, develop, and implement new test or calibration methods, procedures, and training activities.

Complete a wide range of casework assignments.

Operate the instrumentation and software programs within the Forensic Science Division.

Make recommendations for procedural and training changes and updates.

Assist with the training for new staff.

Document and preserve and/or analyze evidence for catastrophic death scenes.

Provide training to user agencies and members of the judicial system.

Entry Level *(Applicants will be screened for possession of these through written, oral, performance, or other evaluation methods.)*

Knowledge of:

Proper scientific and laboratory techniques related to forensic science.

Instrumentation, equipment, and supplies used to analyze evidence.

Basic principles of instrument and method validation.

Standard methods for documenting, preserving, collecting, and handling evidence, to include chain of custody.

Ability to:

Follow standard laboratory test or calibration methods and procedures.

Perform chemical, instrumental, and microscopic analysis as required.

Present scientific findings in written reports and through court testimony.

Work under pressure, exercise good judgement, and make sound and timely decisions.

Work in a variety of environmental conditions, including hazardous weather and remote locations, if assigned to the Forensic Investigation Section.

Work with hazardous chemicals and biological samples.

Communicate effectively, both verbally and in writing.

Work independently on assignments and complete assignments within a timely manner.

Maintain confidentiality of case information.

Establish, maintain, and foster effective and positive working relationships with all those contacted in the course of work.

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS *(Essential duties require the following physical skills and work environment.)*

Ability to work in standard office and laboratory environments, as well as various indoor and outdoor off-site locations. Ability to stand on slippery, uneven or unsteady surfaces for an extended period of time. Ability to frequently stand, walk, stoop, crouch, squat and kneel.

Ability to use scientific and standard office equipment. Ability to work under conditions involving exposure to noise, electrical energy, and chemicals.

Ability to lift and move objects or assist with deceased individuals weighing up to 50 lbs.

May be required to have visual acuity to distinguish basic colors and shades of colors.

Ability to tolerate/work under conditions involving exposure to inclement weather conditions, infectious diseases, insects/parasites (maggots, bed bugs, fleas, etc.), decomposed remains and other strong odors, noise, fumes, gases, smoke, dust, solvents and chemicals, and blood and airborne pathogens.

Ability to drive to counties throughout Northern and Central Nevada and Central California, including remote areas, which may require overnight stay.

Staff is required to participate in the Forensic Science Division's proficiency testing program and successfully complete annual proficiency tests.

Must be willing to travel outside of Washoe County to perform crime/death scene investigations including rural and desert environments.

Must be willing to accept shift work, on-call assignments, and a non-standard workweek.

Selected candidates must complete and submit a Personal History Statement and pass an extensive background investigation, submit a set of fingerprints, pass a pre-employment medical examination, including a drug screen and complete a Computerized Voice Stress Analysis (CVSA) examination.

If assigned to the Biology/DNA or Breath Alcohol Section, the following additional minimum requirements must be met:

Biology/DNA Section:

A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a natural, physical or forensic science with twelve (12) semester hours of coursework as required by the FBI Quality Assurance Standards (QAS) in:

- biochemistry
- genetics
- molecular biology
- statistics or population genetics

Breath Alcohol Section:

A bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university in a natural, physical or forensic science with twenty-four (24) semester hours in the study of chemistry, or eighteen (18) semester hours in the study of chemistry and one year of full-time laboratory experience analyzing alcohol in a forensic setting as required by NRS to be certified as a Forensic Analyst of Alcohol (FAA).

This class specification is used for classification, recruitment and examination purposes. It is not to be considered a substitute for work performance standards.