



For Immediate Release

Captain Deion Glover
Government and Media Relations

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Contact: Chris Loftis - WSP Director of Communications
Phone: (360) 485-3983 (cell) (360) 596-4013 (office)
Email: Chris.Loftis@wsp.wa.gov

WSP Will Dedicate New Toxicology Laboratory this Thursday at 1:00 pm **Federal Way site will allow for greater lab capacity, additional forensic scientists, more advanced technology and help eventually reduce, then eliminate case backlogs**

Federal Way, Washington – The Washington State Patrol’s Forensic Laboratory Services Bureau will dedicate a new Toxicology Laboratory at 1:00 pm on Thursday, December 7. The new site (located at 33810 Weyerhaeuser Way S., Suite 100 in Federal Way) will allow for greater lab capacity and room for additional forensic scientists as well as more advanced equipment which will assist in the critical task of meeting rising demands for toxicology services in Washington.

The dedication will include remarks by Governor Jay Inslee and WSP Chief John R. Batiste as well as Dr. Fiona Couper, Director of the Forensic Laboratory Services Bureau. A brief Q&A will follow for media, and then guided facility tours will be provided for media and invited guests. Due to the delicate and sensitive nature of the work conducted in the facility and layout constraints for a dedication event and tours, credentialed media wishing to attend and photograph are asked to arrive no later than 12:45 pm to allow for signing-in to the secure facility, set up and logistics.

“The addition of the new facility will help to eventually reduce, then eliminate, case backlogs caused by a decade of rapidly increasing demand for toxicology services across the state,” said WSP Chief John R. Batiste. The Chief added “Quite simply, the demand has exceeded capacity and this new lab will help us bring the turn-around times back to the 60-90 day range which is in line with current target times across the industry.”

The current toxicology lab in Seattle is on track to receive over 17,000 case submissions in 2023, a 13% rise from year-to-date figures in 2022. WSP has seen a 45% increase in requests for toxicology services in the past 10 years resulting in a current median turn-around time for DUI analysis of 343 days. The addition of the Federal Way facility allows for the hiring and training of 4 additional technical and 3 administrative positions. The new facility’s design was completed in 2021 with construction beginning in the summer of 2022 and completed in spring of 2023. In the months since, the installation and validation of instruments allowed for accreditation assessments and select evidentiary testing. The \$4.5M, 11,700 square foot facility will also ease transport times for evidence from across the state and allow for the addition of new equipment to the Patrol’s expansive forensic capacity.

“It takes anywhere from 12-18 months to fully train a new scientist for this level of work,” said Chief Batiste. “They come to us with great skills and advanced degrees but they also have to be able to represent both the science and the state in court and that takes even more training and expertise. While the new facility will begin increasing our efficiencies immediately, once the new people are full contributors, we should see a meaningful decline in the turn-around times. As the only fully accredited forensic toxicology program operating in the state, we receive requests from coroners, medical examiners and law enforcement agencies each and every day. It is imperative that we do all that is practical to keep the wheels of justice always moving forward.”

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