

FORENSIC SCIENTIST III

CLASS CONCEPT

This is advanced level professional forensic analysis work that requires the analysis of forensic evidence in a crime laboratory setting to determine if the evidence could support a criminal prosecution. Employees examine and analyze evidence for the most complex casework, make judgments and testify in court as necessary to explain and defend their findings. Employees operate with considerable technical independence and are recognized as experts in their respective disciplines of forensic science. Work includes reviewing the work of laboratory analysts and assistants; assisting in the training of new analysts; researching and evaluating new equipment, techniques and methods; and making recommendations on their adoption; conducting consultations and participating in pretrial conferences with prosecutors and defense attorneys; and training and advising agents and other law enforcement officers. Employees handle and document all evidence under stringent chain of custody rules, and work with issues and factors that are largely undefined and require extensive analysis and frequent development of approaches and techniques. Employees may serve as section chief in the absence of the supervisor. Employees may be required to perform other duties and responsibilities as assigned.

I. DIFFICULTY OF WORK

Variety and Scope – Employees conduct a wide variety of analyses and examinations of evidence, obtain known samples from suspects and victims, provide instructions to law enforcement officers on the proper procedures for handling and obtaining evidence, and conduct crime scene searches to detect and document evidence. Work includes researching and developing new methods and techniques, reviewing the work of other laboratory members for technical accuracy, preparing chemical reagents and standard solutions and conducting limited chemical procedures, conducting formal forensic science training classes, and developing and writing detailed formal reports reflecting the results of examinations.

Intricacy – Employees may use microscopes, scientific instrumentation, chemical tests, or computers to look for the presence, composition, possible origin of evidence or to determine if the data is too limited to make a decision. The work requires both good visual attention and mental concentration. Focus, attention, and concentration are very important in making sure that important information is not overlooked. Each examination may take from several minutes to days to complete, depending upon the quality and quantity of the evidence submitted. Analysts in this position are often required to work the more challenging and intricate cases.

Subject Matter Complexity – Employees apply a complete knowledge of forensic science which includes a knowledge of the principles, theory, and practices of physics, chemistry, biology, computer science, and forensic science.

Guidelines – Employees use a variety of standardized or generally established guidelines such as laboratory procedure manuals, textbooks, instrument handbooks, agency policy, laws, regulations and other reference files.

II. RESPONSIBILITY

Nature of Instructions – Employees usually operate with continuing assignments under general objectives and priorities, and plan their daily and weekly work within those parameters. Supervision or other technical expertise is normally readily available to assist with unusual situations or the most complex problems.

Nature of Review – All case reports are reviewed in detail. Most technical decisions are reviewed except for some made while performing off-site functions such as crime scene searches, court testimony, and conducting training sessions. Successful completion of annual proficiency testing is required.

Scope of Decisions – Work performed could affect laboratory personnel, law enforcement officers, district and defense attorneys, judges, juries, and suspects.

Consequence of Decisions – An incorrect identification, a missed identification, or a judgment with insufficient documentation to support it could convict an innocent person or set a guilty suspect free.

III. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Scope of Contacts – The majority of the contacts are with other laboratory personnel, investigating officers, and district attorneys. Occasional contact may occur with the general public during crime scene searches and with juries during court testimonies.

Nature and Purpose – Most contacts are for the purpose of obtaining, presenting, reporting, or explaining technical information. A more limited portion of contacts is concerned with directing, and motivating assistants and investigating officers, and with persuading or justifying decisions in pretrial conferences or court testimony.

IV. OTHER WORK DEMANDS

Work Conditions – Working conditions are usually in a laboratory or office setting, but can include courtrooms and crime scenes as well.

Hazards – Employees are subject to irritants and hazardous chemicals, radiation, eye strain, and exposure to biological hazards when examining blood, bloody evidence, or other bodily fluids.

RECRUITMENT STANDARDS

Knowledge, Skills and Abilities

Employees must have an advanced knowledge of the principles, concepts theories, reference sources and laboratory practices involved with the forensic examination of evidence.

Employees must have an advanced knowledge of criminal law and of the rules and regulations regarding evidence gathering and handling.

Employees must have an advanced knowledge of scientific methodology and of laboratory safety practices.

Ability to perform and record complex standardized and non-standardized laboratory tests and procedures.

Ability to analyze results, and interpret methodology and to understand and solve theoretical problems.

Ability to express technical information clearly both orally and in writing when reporting results, testifying or explaining procedures to others.

Ability to understand and follow complex oral and written instructions.

Ability to perceive colors normally and make olfactory distinctions.

Ability to establish and maintain effective working relationships.

MINIMUM TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE REQUIREMENTS

Minimum Education and Experience – Drug Chemistry

Bachelor's degree with a major in chemistry or closely related curriculum from an appropriately accredited institution and six years of experience performing bench level analysis in drug chemistry; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Minimum Education and Experience – Latent Evidence

Bachelor's degree with a major in forensic science, biology, chemistry, biochemistry, physical science or closely related curriculum from an appropriately accredited institution and six years of experience performing bench level analysis in latent evidence; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Minimum Education and Experience – Digital Evidence

Bachelor's degree with a major in computer science, digital forensics, networking, information technology, criminal justice or closely related curriculum from an appropriately accredited institution including coursework in science and six years of experience performing bench level analysis in digital evidence; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Minimum Education and Experience – Trace Evidence

Bachelor's degree with a major in chemistry, textile chemistry, physical science or closely related curriculum from an appropriately accredited institution and six years of experience performing bench level analysis in trace evidence; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

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Minimum Education and Experience – Firearms & Tool Marks

Bachelor's degree with a major in forensic science, chemistry, biology, mechanical engineering, physical science or closely related curriculum from an appropriately accredited institution and six years of experience performing bench level analysis in firearms and tool marks; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Minimum Education and Experience – Forensic Biology

Bachelor's degree with a major in biology, microbiology, molecular biology, biochemistry, genetics, animal science, zoology, medical technology or closely related curriculum from an appropriately accredited institution including coursework in biochemistry, genetic, molecular biology, statistics and population genetics and six years of experience performing bench level analysis in forensic biology; or an equivalent combination of education and experience.

Necessary Special Requirement: Must obtain individual certification consistent with international and International Standards Organization standards within eighteen months of the date the analyst becomes eligible to seek certification according to the standards of the certifying entity.

Special Note

This is a generalized representation of positions in this class and is not intended to identify essential functions per ADA. Examples of work are primarily essential functions of the majority of positions in this class, but may not be applicable to all positions.