

FORENSIC SPECIALIST I / II

Definition:

Under direct or general supervision performs non-sworn crime investigation work to include field, office and laboratory assignments at a variety of crime scenes; conducts physical crime scene investigations to identify, collect, preserve and process evidence and latent prints collected and performs related work as required.

Class Titles

Forensic Specialist I
Forensic Specialist II

Essential Duties and Responsibilities:

The responsibilities and essential duties performed on a frequent and recurring basis by an incumbent in this series include the following:

Locates, identifies, collects and preserves evidence discovered at a crime scene or traffic accident.

Develops and lifts latent prints.

Operates a portable argon laser and related photography systems including 35 mm and video cameras.

Prepares and enters latent fingerprints into the CAL-ID computer system.

Operates a personal computer and uses applicable software.

Photographs and diagrams crime scenes and prepares detailed reports of crime scene and lab activity.

Performs various tests, involving but not limited to fingerprinting and skin scraping, on witnesses, victims and suspects in custody.

Performs rape kit functions which include pubic hair combing, cutting or plucking pubic hair, performing penal swabs and taking overall nude photographs of suspects.

Analyzes selected evidence as appropriate.

Photographs prisoners and others.

Testifies in court and prepares evidence for courtroom presentation.

Provides training to sworn personnel related to the collection and preservation of evidence.

Searches criminal records, court records and files.

Maintains fingerprint and crime scene files.

Prepares photographic solutions and other chemicals and assists in film processing and development.

Uses a variety of hand tools and lifts and moves equipment and other items weighing 50 pounds or less.

Drives a vehicle on City business.

Other Duties and Responsibilities:

Performs other projects/tasks as assigned.

Class Characteristics:

Forensic Specialist I is a multi-incumbent entry level class, not requiring prior experience in crime scene investigation. Forensic Specialist II is a multi-incumbent, journey level class. Incumbents on both levels work independently on all but the most difficult assignments and perform the full range of crime scene investigation tasks. Forensic Specialist II's assist in the training of Forensic Specialist I's and, in the absence of the Lead Forensic Specialist, may act as the lead for laboratory operations during the day shift and be called out for major crime scene duties.

Contacts and Relationships:

A Forensic Specialist establishes and maintains contact with other Police Department staff and will have contact with court system staff and the public to include suspects in custody, victims and witnesses.

Qualification Guidelines:

The knowledge and abilities which are required to perform the duties and responsibilities of this series are as follows:

Forensic Specialist I

Knowledge of:

English usage, spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Basic procedures of forensics, fingerprint lifting techniques and crime scene investigation.

Basic report and memo writing.

Basic computer operation and applications.

Basic math.

AND

Ability to:

Understand and follow oral and written instructions.

Work under limited supervision.

Communicate effectively orally and in writing.

Make effective oral presentations in front of groups and learn to testify in court.

Read and write at the level required for successful job performance.

Establish and maintain effective relationships with those contacted in the course of work.

Learn and apply department operating policies, methods, rules and regulations.

Learn to draw finished crime scene sketches and operate equipment as assigned to include the CAL-ID computer system.

Use good judgment and make sound decisions in accordance with established policies and procedures.

Maintain the confidentiality of sensitive law enforcement related information.

Forensic Specialist II

Knowledge of:

Those items listed under "Knowledge" for Forensic Specialist I, plus the following:

Goals of the Police Department's crime scene and laboratory section.

Recognition, collection and preservation of all types of evidence.

Photographic techniques needed to record or visualize physical evidence.

Video camera operation for crime scene documentation and operation of 35 mm camera and flash equipment.

Recent technology in identifying and collecting latent prints, firearms, tool marks, physical matches and imprinted evidence.

Fingerprint pattern recognition, classification and search processes.

Operation, use and care of laboratory equipment and laboratory and general safety procedures.

Basic darkroom procedures for processing color and black and white photographs, emulsion chemistry and the use of automatic film and paper color processors.

Computer applications as they relate to computer designed diagrams, the Computer Imaging Fingerprinting Program and the CAL-ID Fingerprint System.

AND

Ability to:

Perform those items listed under "Ability to" for Forensic Specialist I, plus the following:

Use equipment as assigned for the identification, collection, preservation and processing of physical evidence to include laser and light source equipment for latent fingerprint detection.

Prepare comprehensive reports and records.

Draw finished crime scene sketches.

Prepare court exhibits.

Testify in court as an expert witness on fingerprint collection, evaluation, comparison and identification.

Qualify as an expert witness in the disciplines of photography, diagramming and video camera use.

Apply or modify existing techniques to develop normal, contaminated or indented latent finger prints.

Classify latent finger prints for automated search and retrieval.

A typical way to obtain the knowledge and abilities is as follows:

Forensic Specialist I

Education: Associate of Arts Degree from an accredited college in police science or a related field to include some coursework in photography.

AND

Experience: One year of responsible public contact work.

Forensic Specialist II

Education: Associate of Arts Degree from an accredited college in police science or a related field to include some coursework in photography.

AND

Experience: Two years of experience as a forensic specialist, crime scene investigator or identification technician with a police agency.

Special Requirements:

Valid and appropriate California Drivers License and acceptable driving record at time of appointment and throughout employment in this series.

Must be able to successfully pass a Police Department pre-employment screening process.

Must be able to work a flexible schedule to include emergency call in, overtime, call-back, shift work, nights, holidays and weekends to accommodate City needs.

In order to be considered for progression from a Forensic Specialist I to a Forensic Specialist II position, an incumbent must have all the required knowledge and abilities, have testified in court as an expert witness and have handled a homicide at the Forensic Specialist I level.

Physical Tasks and Working Conditions Include the Following:

Work is performed in a variety of locations to include on-site work at crime scenes/incidents, hospitals and in the Police Department. Work is performed indoors and outdoors. When work is performed outdoors, there is full exposure to the elements. An incumbent drives a vehicle on City business, uses a computer, sits, stands, walks on slippery and uneven surfaces, kneels, crouches, twists, climbs ladders and inclines, reaches, bends, crawls and grasps, pushes, pulls, drags and lifts equipment and other items weighing 50 pounds or less. An incumbent operates a variety of hand tools to include screw drivers, hammers, pliers and wrenches and may be exposed to grease/oil, fumes, solvents or chemicals, dust, vehicular traffic and smoke. An incumbent may be exposed to related health hazards to include blood and other bodily fluids/products and human borne parasites and may have contact with complete and/or partial human corpses in various stages of decomposition. Incumbents must be able to meet the physical requirements of the class and have mobility, vision, hearing and dexterity levels appropriate to the duties to be performed.

Fair Labor Standards Act Designation: Non-exempt.