



NEWS RELEASE

From New York State Acting Inspector General
Catherine Leahy Scott

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IMPROPER LAB PRACTICES LED TO DESTRUCTION OF KEY EVIDENCE IN CRIMINAL CASES

*Viable Evidence Destroyed Based on Lab Director's
Irresponsible "Legal" Determination*

Acting State Inspector General Catherine Leahy Scott today released an investigative report that found improper and irresponsible practices by management at the Monroe County Public Safety Laboratory. These actions led to key evidence in criminal cases, including a rape, being destroyed.

The Inspector General's investigation revealed that Laboratory Administrator Janet Anderson-Seaquist and a top member of her staff – neither of whom are lawyers – unilaterally determined that 270 criminal cases pending evidence review could not be tested as they were time barred. The Laboratory returned this evidence to referring law enforcement agencies, reporting to them that the cases were "past the statute of limitations." The Lab's incorrect determination of cases being time barred was relied upon by the referring police agencies, which in turn destroyed the evidence in a number of those cases.

"Forensic laboratories serve a critical function in the criminal justice system. The integrity of our forensic laboratories is essential, and the public deserves full confidence in their results," said Acting Inspector General Scott. "Individuals charged with supervising our labs must be held to the highest standards, which include sound oversight, management and policies."

Anderson-Seaquist took over management of the lab, which serves Monroe and the seven surrounding counties, in January 2011. Prior to her appointment in Monroe County, Anderson-Seaquist served as the Supervising Forensic Scientist for the Ventura County Sheriff's Crime Laboratory in Ventura, California.

Upon learning what had been done, the Monroe County District Attorney's Office reviewed the improper actions of the Laboratory and determined the statute of limitations had not expired in at least 41 of the cases returned to referring agencies. Anderson-Seaquist was further informed by the District Attorney's Office that the Lab's failure to test evidence may result in the inability to arrest and convict violent criminals thereby potentially allowing the offenders to engage in additional criminal conduct.

Subsequent testing of some of the evidence that was not destroyed linked DNA evidence from three burglaries and a rape to prior offenders in DNA databases.

The Inspector General also found that Anderson-Seaquist misled the New York State Commission on Forensic Science when responding to the Commission regarding a review of one analyst's work on evidence collected from victims of sex crimes. When a commissioner requested that three prior cases analyzed by a technician who made an error be rechecked, Anderson-Seaquist asserted, "Actually, we rechecked all of them." In fact, the Laboratory had not.

The Inspector General's investigation also uncovered deficiencies in the corrective action policies implemented by the Laboratory in response to the analyst's error. In one instance, a supervisor failed to properly document results of an audit of previous forensic evidence analyses.

The Inspector General's report recommends changes to existing Laboratory policies to prohibit personnel from issuing reports from including legal opinions, and that the Laboratory establish and maintain regular communication with the law enforcement agencies it serves. The Inspector General's report also recommends that Laboratory policies, as they relate to audits, corrective actions and documentation be strengthened.

The Inspector General has referred this report to the New York State Forensic Commission and the Monroe County District Attorney, County Executive, and Director of Public Safety.

The Inspector General's report can be viewed [here](#).

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