



Sacramento District Attorney's Office

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From: Michael Toms, Supervising Criminalist

Subject: Laboratory of Forensic Services Evidential Breath Alcohol Testing

The Sacramento County District Attorney's Laboratory of Forensic Services (LFS) is Nationally Accredited by ANAB - The American National Standards Institute and only hire Criminalists that have, at minimum, a Bachelor of Scientific Degree in Forensic Science or a Natural Science. The LFS Criminalists receive training from staff with extensive scientific training, various professional organizations, specialized university programs, federal and state institutions, as well as, instrumentation manufacturers. The LFS Criminalists receive ongoing training each year in their areas of expertise.

The current instrumentation employed by the LFS for evidential breath testing is the Dräger Alcotest 9510. This instrument measures breath alcohol levels by two different technologies, fuel cell & infrared detection, to ensure accurate results. Calibration of our instruments is always performed by the manufacture.

When the LFS receives calibrated instruments from Dräger they are verified for accuracy over their linear range (0% to 0.40%) using 6 National Institute of Technology (NIST) traceable standards before deployment. These calibration standards are purchased from Intoximeters which has an ISO 17025:2005 Calibration Laboratory Accreditation from the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA).

After the instrument accuracy is verified, a pre-installation maintenance test is performed to ensure the instrument detects and reports all testing errors. It is the LFS policy that all repairs are performed only by the manufacture. All instruments are sealed with screws that require a specialized key; therefore, the LFS has never accessed the internal components of any instrument.

All local and state law enforcement agencies in Sacramento County are trained by authorized LFS staff members on the LFS testing method prior to use. A breath testing method checklist is required to be completed and signed by the operator with each test, which was designed to eliminate potential operator errors.

The LFS releases a Periodic Accuracy Check record that includes the date of each test, results of both technologies, the NIST traceable standard concentration and lot number used to evaluate the accuracy. In addition, we provide a monthly Maintenance Record and Subject Test Log for each instrument, which includes repairs and any of errors that occur with each subject test.

The preliminary alcohol screening (PAS) devices mentioned in the article are not supported by the LFS. Each local law enforcement agency in Sacramento are responsible for their programs'; therefore, I cannot speak to their method(s) of testing or the accuracy of their results.