

	GENERAL ORDER	Effective: 10-01-2021	# 06-05
		Section: Specialized Functions	Replaces or Modifies: Special Order 2017-02
		Title: Field Testing of Suspected Drugs	
Issued by: Chief Deputy Mattie Provost			

Purpose:

To provide guidance on use of field testing kits that are utilized as a screening test for the presumptive identification of certain drugs.

Policy:

The Fort Bend County Sheriff’s Office (FBCSO) has a concern about the use of field testing kits since recent developments have shown that there is a real risk that unless extreme precautions are taken employees may inadvertently be exposed to certain drugs that are potentially a serious threat to health (examples include fentanyl and carfentanyl [both also have a spelling variation that replaces the y with an i]).

FBCSO employees will only use field testing kits to provide presumptive identification of drugs in accordance with this General order.

Definition:

Drugs – Drugs defined as illegal in Texas Law and includes but is not limited to terms such as controlled substances and narcotics.

Procedure:

- I. As a general practice FBCSO employees will not use field testing kits to provide presumptive identification of drugs.
 - A. Exceptions to this general practice must be approved on a case by case basis by Captain or higher authority and only after adequate safety precautions are in place to reasonably ensure there is minimal risk of exposure to toxic substances.
- II. Employees will ensure that their reports (including but not limited to offense reports, probable cause statements, affidavits for search & arrest warrants) articulate thoroughly the facts that support the belief that an item is a particular drug.
 - A. The following are examples to include when applicable. Further, reports should list how any example used tends to support the belief that the item is believed to be a drug.
 - 1. Physical appearance (this may include color, shape, identification markings, etc...)
 - 2. Packaging
 - 3. Presence of drug paraphernalia
 - 4. Statements made by defendant(s) and/or witnesses
 - 5. Location where suspected drug was found
 - 6. Odors [caution – this refers only to ambient odors (those in the surrounding area) and is not intended to suggest actively breathing in the air directly around a potential drug without use of appropriate protective equipment]
 - 7. Defendant(s)’
 - a. Movements

- b. Demeanor
 - c. Attempts to conceal item
 - d. Prior drug arrest history
 - 8. Arresting/investigating officer(s) experience in prior drug cases where identification of same/similar drugs were confirmed by a Lab
- III. Safety precautions when handling suspected drugs
 - A. Skin contact with any suspected drug should be avoided by use of appropriate protection (nitrile gloves are to be used whenever possible)
 - B. Precautions shall be taken to minimize movement of suspected drugs that has the potential to cause the creation of airborne particles. In cases where there is known drug airborne particle matter present - appropriate breathing masks should be utilized as applicable.
 - C. If any person (including but not limited to employees) is suspected of having been exposed to dangerous drugs, EMS is to be immediately requested. Signs of exposure include but are not limited to:
 - 1. Respiratory depression or arrest
 - 2. Drowsiness
 - 3. Disorientation
 - 4. Pinpoint pupils
 - 5. Clammy skin
 - 6. High pulse rate
 - 7. Rapid change in blood pressure
 - 8. Nausea/vomiting
 - 9. Blurred Vision
 - 10. Hallucinations
 - D. In addition to fentanyl/carfentanyl - drugs such as phencyclidine (PCP) and lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) have high potential for accidental exposure when handling. Employees are reminded to treat all drug related items with the mindset that they could contain these types of drugs even if only as an addition (example marijuana laced with PCP).
- IV. Issues concerning acceptance of charges
 - A. If a magistrate rules that a warrantless arrest without a field test being conducted does not support probable cause, the case will be referred to CID.
 - 1. CID will then take steps to coordinate with the District Attorney's Office to obtain a warrant.
 - 2. Dependent upon the particular facts associated with the case there may be need to have the suspected drugs tested by a lab.
 - 3. The Captain over CID is charged with developing a process to deal with these cases.
- V. Only the Sheriff or Chief Deputy may authorize exceptions to this General order.