

Evaluation of a Police Department's Contraband Drug Disposal Process

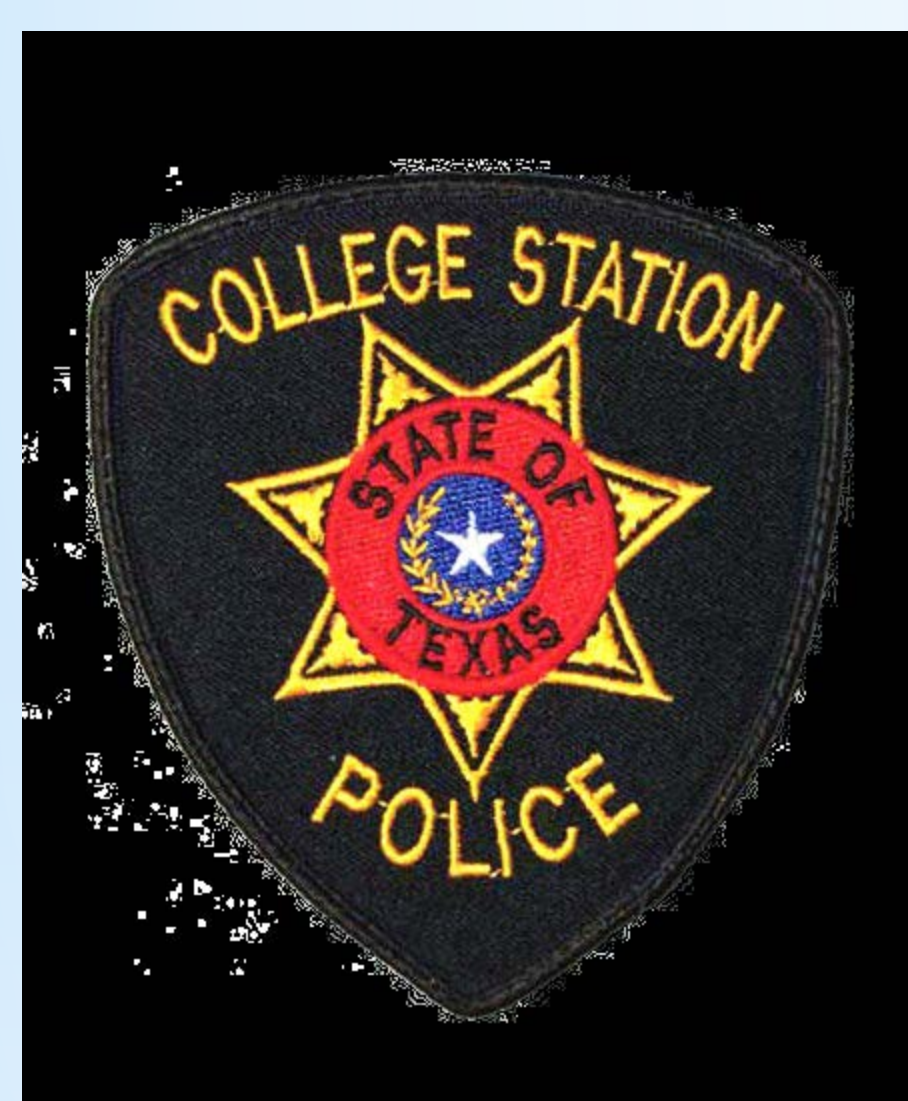
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College Station Police Department (CSPD)

City of College Station, Texas College Station Police Department



My internship opportunity was with the Police Department, College Station, Texas, in the Criminal Investigative Division (CID) and the Evidence Section under the mentorship of the CID and Information Services Managers.

Organization of the College Station Police Department:



- Led by Jeff Capps, Chief of Police
- Contains:
 - 3 Bureaus led by Assistant Chiefs:
 - Operational Support
 - Criminal Investigative Division
 - Lt. Leslie Hicks
 - Sgt. Craig Boyett
 - Field Operations
 - Administrative Support
 - Information Services – Records/Evidence
 - Stephanie Simmons, Manager
 - Martha Hennessey – Evidence Technician
 - Matthew Stephens– Evidence Technician

The Police Department consists of 121 sworn officers and additional support personnel who in 2012 handled 80,412 calls for service, investigated 2,179 cases (with a 62% clearance rate), confiscated more than \$282,000 worth of illegal drugs, and recorded 24,605 reports and supplements.¹

Internship Goal and Objectives

- The primary goal of this project was to gain relevant knowledge related to the proper collection, storage, and disposal of illicit and prescription drugs and drug delivery devices (contraband) by law enforcement.
- Specific objectives included:
 - Collecting information regarding methods used by CSPD and other law enforcement agencies to destroy contraband
 - Evaluating the information collected and recommending alternatives to the destruction process in order to optimize cost-effectiveness and environmental safety



Figure 1

Description and Evaluation of Destruction Process

Through this internship I became familiar with CSPD procedures for collecting, storing, and disposing of drug contraband evidence.² Historically, all contraband was delivered to a commercial incinerator in southeast Texas for disposal. In 2012, the department obtained a 55 gallon cyclonic burn barrel (Figure 1).³ This barrel is used to destroy all but the most volatile drug substances. These substances are still taken to a southeast Texas medical waste incinerator. Cost for incineration involves a travel day for an officer and technician, vehicle expenses, and an incineration fee of \$2.00 per pound of material. Prior to obtaining the burn barrel, the department made 2-3 trips per year and spent approximately \$500 in incineration fees (Figure 2). Since obtaining the burn barrel, the cost in fees has decreased to approximately \$50 and consists of 1 trip per year. A Department of Public safety incinerator located in Austin, Texas is also available for use at no cost, however contraband must be removed from its



Figure 2

original container. The personnel time involved to transfer the material outweighs the cost of the current commercial fee. Also, the potential for exposure to hazardous substances increases with the additional manipulation.⁴ On-site agency incineration was found to be the most common and cost-effective method for destruction of contraband. Environmental risks should be minimal if limited to plant-based and low volatility materials.

Relationship to Career Goals

- Evaluate currently available technologies for drug and device destruction
- Apply knowledge of the environmental sciences with pharmacology, toxicology, and pharmaceuticals to inform law enforcement agencies and interest groups about appropriate methods for disposal of drugs and drug containing devices

References

1. <http://www.cstx.gov/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=16286>
2. College Station Police Department (2012) Policy Manual
3. www.elastec.com/portableincinerators/drugterminator/
4. Pharmaceuticals in the environment: Sources, fate, effects, and risks (2nd ed., pp. 463-495). Berlin: Springer



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