

The INFORMANT

The Kansas City Missouri Police Department

Drug-testing device improves safety

A piece of technology that protects officers from deadly drugs and speeds up the prosecution of narcotics cases is now widely available at the Department, thanks to the Police Foundation of Kansas City.

There now is a TruNarc device at every patrol division station, as well as the original two that were assigned to the Drug Enforcement Unit. TruNarc is a handheld narcotics analyzer that uses spectroscopy to identify drugs through their packaging.

(Spectroscopy is the study of the absorption and emission of light and other radiation by matter.) Each TruNarc device costs about \$25,000.

Captain Daniel Graves requested the initial TruNarc devices in 2016 both to address a Drug Enforcement Unit backlog and for the safety of officers and lab personnel.

“The main reason for the back-log is the prosecutor’s office requiring lab results on cases prior to the cases being filed,” he wrote.

Prosecutors’ offices later agreed to file cases with a TruNarc presumptive test. They now require lab analysis only if the case goes to trial.

“Even though it’s still a presumptive test, so far it’s proven to be 100% accurate,” said Forensic Specialist Michelle Nordyke, who is assigned to the Drug Enforcement Unit.

Safety was another huge reason for the implementation of TruNarc. Fentanyl and carfentanil can be deadly with very little exposure. Just 5-7 grains of salt’s worth of pure fentanyl is deadly. Documented cases of law enforcement fentanyl exposure have required officers to be administered the counter-drug Narcan to survive.

In 2017, a KCPD Drug Enforcement Unit forensic specialist was called to the scene of two dead bodies in which an unknown powder was found next to the deceased.

“The TruNarc device donated by the Police Foundation was used to test the unknown powder, which showed a positive response for fentanyl,” a Metro Meth Section sergeant wrote. “The importance of this test was significant in that if not for the TruNarc, Crime Scene personnel may have treated the substance like any other unknown powder and most likely would not have used the proper protective

equipment when recovering the substance.”

That incident prompted the department to issue a directive that stopped the traditional field testing of suspected non-organic narcotics. With TruNarc devices at every patrol division, however, these tests can safely resume. A special order issued July 18, 2019, explains how officers should use TruNarc.

“This is specifically for white rock, powder and crystal substances,” Forensic Specialist Nordyke said.

TruNarc can identify 250 different types of



The TruNarc device uses spectrometry to determine what type of narcotic is contained in a package without opening it.

drugs, cutting agents and precursors.

“It’s awesome,” Nordyke said. “The laser shoots right through the packaging. You don’t have to open a package, and there’s no usage of the substance for testing.”

The Drug Enforcement Unit can even use the devices to identify substances still in syringes. The Forensic Specialists assigned to the Metro Meth Section like Nordyke still get called out to scenes when there is unpackaged, loose white powder. They even respond to assist outside agencies using the TruNarc.

Within the first year of

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Virtual training system gets needed upgrades

The new and improved VirTra police training simulator at the Kansas City Regional Police Academy is more realistic, more adaptable and a tad electric.

After months offline, the upgraded VirTra launched in mid-August.

"It's as close to real-life as you can get," Sergeant Kelly Clark said.

The virtual training system presents recruits and seasoned officers with a variety of shoot/don't shoot scenarios. The instructor can change them depending on officers' actions.

"The goal is to get police officers to engage," Sergeant Clark said. "They're not all firearms scenarios. Some of them are just seeing how you talk to an emotionally disturbed person."

Simulated training at the Academy has come a long way since FATS, the Firearms Training Simulator of the 1990s that started out on a

laser disc. (Laser discs were the record-size precursors to DVDs.) VirTra was installed when the Academy was built in 2007. It was last upgraded in 2012.

In addition to four software upgrades since that time, the equipment on the department's existing system had become unreliable. The projector went in and out. Only one of the simulated firearms still worked, and it leaked the carbon dioxide that was used to give the guns realistic recoil when fired. The Academy stopped using the whole VirTra system in May 2019 until it could be replaced. The last entrant officer class never got to experience it.

The new \$70,000 system features many upgrades. There are no more

cords attached to the simulated firearms, so officers aren't tethered. The system also includes platforms for patrol rifle scenarios. Like the previous one, it also includes less-lethal options. There are a host of new scenarios with multiple different outcomes. The instructor running the simulation can change those at a mo-

"It reinforces that you can continue to fire and operate if you've been injured," he said. "It increases awareness."

Although he didn't like the small shock he received, Probationary Police Officer Roman Guzman, who graduated from the Academy Sept. 12 with Entrant Officer Class 166, said he liked how the

repeated scenarios helped hone his skills.

Brandon Keeton, also a member of EOC 166 headed for the North Kansas City Police Department, said he enjoyed using the new VirTra and found it to be pretty realistic.

"It's good for helping you realize how you react to a situation," Keeton said. "It shows you how quickly things can happen."

Other recent users of the new system included journalism students at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Several of them said they changed their minds about excessive force in officer-involved shootings after experiencing

the ambiguities and rapidly unfolding situations police face.

Sergeant Clark hopes to one day get a smaller, portable version of VirTra for use at community events so the public better understands use-of-force scenarios. It also could be used for recruitment.

After Academy staff members all get trained on operating the new VirTra, the intention is for it to be open at set times like the firing range for officers to come practice. Sergeant Clark said VirTra will likely once again be an annual training requirement for sworn officers like it used to be before the previous system became unreliable.



The Academy's upgraded virtual training system received a much-needed upgrade in August. New features include rifle platforms and a "threat fire system."

ment's notice. The new VirTra also records video and audio. Instructors can play both back, showing users where they fired, any mistakes they made, and what they said.

"If we tell them, 'You didn't say to drop the gun,' and they claim they did say that, we can roll that back for them and show them," Sergeant Clark said.

Perhaps one of the most noticeable changes is referred to as the "Threat Fire System." This delivers a microburst of electricity from the simulated firearm's holster worn at the waist whenever a user gets shot in the simulation. That short, painful jolt caused some recent entrant officers to fall down, but it's there for a reason Sergeant Clark said.

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their use at KCPD, TruNarc helped clear a backlog of 900 drug cases. Nordyke said she has heard nothing but positive feedback from detectives. Everyone is still learning the appropriate field documentation procedures, but the ease and safety is catching on.

The Police Foundation of Kansas City provides funds for equipment and programs beyond what the KCPD can support in its budget.

Captain Graves said their investment in the TruNarc devices has made a real difference.

"We are arresting numerous subjects daily where the TruNarc is being utilized," he wrote. "The device is making our officers safer, expediting cases saving us thousands of dollars in regard to other test kits, manpower, lab expenses and most importantly risk."

Mobile fingerprint devices make quick IDs

ATV riders recently found a man's body in a wooded area in eastern Kansas City. Officers could tell the body had been there for a few days and couldn't find any identification on the man, so they called crime scene investigators, who brought out a mobile fingerprint ID handheld device.

The Morpho ID Mobile Fingerprint Identification Device is a handheld device capable of digitally scanning up to 5 sets of fingerprints at a time, and it will soon be available department-wide. The device is very user-friendly and gives step-by-step instructions on its small screen, even giving a green check mark when the fingerprint is done scanning. After the fingerprints have been scanned, a mini USB cord plugs the device into a computer with the device's software.

Fingerprints are searched through two databases, the Missouri Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS) and Risk, an FBI database. Within 10 seconds, fingerprints located in a database can come back as a strong possible match, which gives the name, birthdate, sex and photo if available.

In 2017, when the new KCPD Crime Lab opened at its newest location at 2645 Brooklyn, eight mobile fingerprint ID devices were purchased for the exclusive use of crime scene investigators. This summer, the Missouri Chiefs and Sheriffs Association gave KCPD 50 more mobile fingerprint ID devices to use outside of the Crime Lab, primarily by field officers.

Currently, when an officer needs to identify someone, such as the man who was found in the woods, they would need to take inked fingerprints of all ten fingers and send them to the lab for analysis. The

mobile fingerprint ID device is as small as a cell phone. Department members can take it out to a scene, where it needs only to digitally scan the two index fingers. That provides all the information it needs in order to search the databases.

The mobile fingerprint ID device immediately identified the unknown man the ATV riders had found. His family had reported him missing a few days prior. They got closure immediately instead of waiting for weeks for the fingerprints to be processed and analyzed. No foul play was involved.

Latent Print Section Supervisor Robert Fields said there are several units, such as Accident Investigations, Traffic and patrol station sergeants, who will be receiving the devices in the coming months.

"We want to make sure every sergeant going through in-service training is properly trained to use the devices before we send them out," Fields said

Training goes through the end of November this year. Supervisor Fields said he is hopeful to send out the devices once training is complete to the units who will most benefit from the fast and helpful results.



News in Brief



Mayor Quinton Lucas, whose term in office began Aug. 1, was sworn into the Board of Police Commissioners at their Aug. 20 meeting.



The seven members of Lateral Class Six graduated Aug. 12 after undergoing the Department's 11-week lateral training program.

Upcoming Events

October 5
KC United Against Crime

October 22
Board of Police Commissioners Meeting

The Informant is a publication of KCPD's Media Unit (816) 234-5170 kcpd.org

The mission of the Kansas City Missouri Police Department is to protect and serve with professionalism, honor and integrity.

Officially Speaking

Awards

Special Unit Citation
Metro Patrol Impact Squad
North Property Crimes Section

Life-Saving Award

Officers Ronald Boehmer and Richard Green
Officers John Barbee, Austin Reed and Valerie Tirado
Officers Nathan Hall, Michael Heard and LaTondra Moore
Officers Nathan Hall and Rajdeep Khakh
Officer Edward Williams
Officer Nicholas Quatrocky

Meritorious Service Awards

Detective Alane Booth
Sergeant LeGrande "Scott McGregor"
Officer Michael Moats

Certificates of Commendation

Sergeant Michael Helvie and Officer

Shawn Stigler
Officers Aaron Jones and Steven Weber
Captain Luis Ortiz; Sergeants Damon Hawley and Michael Jones; Detective Johnathan Dawdy and Officer Corby Adams
Officer Oliver Weeks

25-Year Ring

Director Linda Netzel

Retirements

Officer Michael "Scott" Allen
Officer Stephen Bray
Communications Specialist Marcia Goede
Officer Larryn Lewis

Obituaries

Retired Sergeant Ronald Closterman
Retired Officer Phillip Johnson
Retired Civilian Donna McCray