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## For Your Information

### About the National Institute of Justice

A component of the Office of Justice Programs, NIJ is the research, development and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. NIJ's mission is to advance scientific research, development and evaluation to enhance the administration of justice and public safety. NIJ's principal authorities are derived from the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended (see 42 USC §§ 3721–3723).

The NIJ Director is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The Director establishes the Institute's objectives, guided by the priorities of the Office of Justice Programs, the U.S. Department of Justice, and the needs of the field. The Institute actively solicits the views of criminal justice and other professionals and researchers to inform its search for the knowledge and tools to guide policy and practice.

#### Strategic Goals

NIJ has seven strategic goals grouped into three categories:

##### Creating relevant knowledge and tools

1. Partner with state and local practitioners and policymakers to identify social science research and technology needs.
2. Create scientific, relevant and reliable knowledge — with a particular emphasis on terrorism, violent crime, drugs and crime, cost-effectiveness and community-based efforts — to enhance the administration of justice and public safety.
3. Develop affordable and effective tools and technologies to enhance the administration of justice and public safety.

##### Dissemination

4. Disseminate relevant knowledge and information to practitioners and policymakers in an understandable, timely and concise manner.
5. Act as an honest broker to identify the information, tools and technologies that respond to the needs of stakeholders.

##### Agency management

6. Practice fairness and openness in the research and development process.
7. Ensure professionalism, excellence, accountability, cost-effectiveness and integrity in the management and conduct of NIJ activities and programs.

##### Program Areas

In addressing these strategic challenges, the Institute is involved in the following program areas: crime control and prevention, including policing; drugs and crime; justice systems and offender behavior, including corrections; violence and victimization; communications and information technologies; critical incident response; investigative and forensic sciences, including DNA; less lethal technologies; officer protection; education and training technologies; testing and standards; technology assistance to law enforcement and corrections agencies; field testing of promising programs; and international crime control.

In addition to sponsoring research and development and technology assistance, NIJ evaluates programs, policies and technologies. NIJ communicates its research and evaluation findings through conferences and print and electronic media.

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## About the Law Enforcement and Corrections Standards and Testing Program

The Law Enforcement and Corrections Standards and Testing Program is sponsored by the Office of Science and Technology of the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The program responds to the mandate of the Justice System Improvement Act of 1979, which directed NIJ to encourage research and development to improve the criminal justice system and to disseminate the results to federal, state and local agencies.

The Law Enforcement and Corrections Standards and Testing Program is an applied research effort that determines the technological needs of justice system agencies, sets minimum performance standards for specific devices, tests commercially available equipment against those standards, and disseminates the standards and the test results to criminal justice agencies nationwide and internationally.

The program operates through the following:

- The **Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Advisory Council (LECTAC)**, consisting of nationally recognized criminal justice practitioners from federal, state and local agencies, assesses technological needs and sets priorities for research programs and items to be evaluated and tested.
- The **Office of Law Enforcement Standards (OLES)** at the National Institute of Standards and Technology develops voluntary national performance standards for compliance testing to ensure that individual items of equipment are suitable for use by criminal justice agencies. The equipment standards developed by OLES are based on laboratory evaluation of commercially available products in order to devise precise test methods that can be universally applied by any qualified testing laboratory and to establish minimum performance requirements for each attribute of a piece of equipment that is essential to how it functions. OLES-developed standards can serve as design criteria for manufacturers or as the basis for equipment evaluation. The application of the standards, which are highly technical in nature, is augmented through the publication of equipment performance reports and user guides. Individual jurisdictions may use the standards in their own laboratories to test equipment, have equipment tested on their behalf using the standards, or cite the standards in procurement specifications.
- The **National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC)**-National, operated by a grantee, supervises a national compliance testing program conducted by independent laboratories. The standards developed by OLES serve as performance benchmarks against which commercial equipment is measured. In addition, NIJ has begun a new process for developing some standards using Special Technical Committees (STCs), which include practitioners, scientists and subject matter experts. OLES participates in the STC process. The facilities, personnel and testing capabilities of the independent laboratories are evaluated by OLES prior to testing each item of equipment. In addition, OLES helps NLECTC staff review and analyze data. Test results are published in consumer product reports designed to help justice system procurement officials make informed purchasing decisions.

Publications are available at no charge through NLECTC. Some documents are also available online through the Justice Technology Information Network (JUSTNET), the center's World Wide Web site. To request a document or additional information, call (800) 248-2742 or (301) 519-5069 or write:

### **National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center-National**

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## About the National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center System

The National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center (NLECTC) system recently completed a reorganization that will better enable the system to carry out its critical mission to assist state, major city and county, rural, tribal and border, as well as federal law enforcement, corrections and other criminal justice agencies in addressing their technology needs and challenges. Originally created in 1994 as a program of the National Institute of Justice's (NIJ's) Office of Science and Technology, the NLECTC system has realigned its outreach efforts into three new centers: the States, Major Cities and Counties Regional Center; the Small, Rural, Tribal and Border Regional Center; and the Alaska Regional Center.

The States, Major Cities and Counties Regional Center offers a resource and outreach mechanism for state, major city and county criminal justice system partners, with a mission of ensuring that larger criminal justice agencies (those having 50 or more sworn personnel) have unbiased access to a full range of relevant scientific and technology-related information. The Small, Rural, Tribal and Border Regional Center publicizes its programs and services to small, rural, tribal and border agencies across the country. The Alaska Regional Center serves as a conduit for agencies in Alaska.

The efforts of these centers complement those of NLECTC-National, which coordinates NIJ's Compliance Testing program and standards development efforts for a variety of equipment used in the public safety arena, and the Centers of Excellence (CoEs), which support NIJ's research, development, testing and evaluation (RDT&E) efforts in specific portfolio areas. The CoEs focus on the following topic areas: Communications Technologies; Electronic Crime Technology; Forensics Technology; Information and Sensor Systems; and Weapons and Protective Systems. The National Institute of Standards and Technology's Office of Law Enforcement Standards provides scientific and research support to these efforts.

As a whole, the NLECTC system provides:

- Scientific and technical support to NIJ's RDT&E projects.
- Support for the transfer and adoption of technology into practice by law enforcement and corrections agencies, courts and crime laboratories.
- Assistance in developing and disseminating equipment performance standards and technology guides.
- Assistance in the demonstration, testing and evaluation of criminal justice tools and technologies.
- Technology information and general and specialized technology assistance.
- Assistance in setting NIJ's research agenda by convening practitioner-based advisory groups to help identify criminal justice technology needs and gaps.

The NLECTC system supports NIJ's RDT&E process and goal of setting research priorities based on practitioner needs by sponsoring a series of Technology Working Groups and Constituent Advisory Groups, who provide input to the Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Advisory Council. Together, these groups form a bridge between the criminal justice community and the NIJ Office of Science and Technology.

For more information, call (800) 248-2742, e-mail [asknlectc@nlectc.org](mailto:asknlectc@nlectc.org) or visit <http://www.justnet.org>.

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## About the Office of Law Enforcement Standards

The Office of Law Enforcement Standards (OLES) was established as a matrix management organization in 1971 through a Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. Departments of Justice and Commerce based on the recommendations of the President's Commission on Crime. OLES' mission is to apply science and technology to the needs of the criminal justice community, including law enforcement, corrections, forensic science and the fire service. While its major objective is to develop minimum performance standards, which are promulgated as voluntary national standards, OLES also undertakes studies leading to the publication of technical reports and user guides.

The areas of research investigated by OLES include clothing, communication systems, emergency equipment, investigative aids, protective equipment, security systems, vehicles, weapons, and analytical techniques and standard reference materials used by the forensic science community. The composition of OLES' projects varies depending on priorities of the criminal justice community at any given time and, as necessary, draws on the resources of the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

OLES assists law enforcement and criminal justice agencies in acquiring, on a cost-effective basis, the high-quality resources they need to do their jobs. To accomplish this, OLES:

- Develops methods for testing equipment performance and examining evidentiary materials.
- Develops standards for equipment and operating procedures.
- Develops standard reference materials.
- Performs other scientific and engineering research as required.

Since the program began in 1971, OLES has coordinated the development of standards, user guides and advisory reports on topics that range from performance parameters of police patrol vehicles, to performance reports on various speed-measuring devices, to soft body armor testing, to analytical procedures for developing DNA profiles.

The application of technology to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the criminal justice community continues to increase. The proper adoption of the products resulting from emerging technologies and the assessment of equipment performance, systems, methodologies, etc., used by criminal justice practitioners constitute critical issues having safety and legal ramifications. The consequences of inadequate equipment performance or inadequate test methods can range from inconvenient to catastrophic. In addition, these deficiencies can adversely affect the general population when they increase public safety costs, preclude arrest or result in evidence found to be inadmissible in court.





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