

Victoria Police Manual – Procedures and Guidelines

Use of field drug spot testing kits

Source Policy

These Procedures and Guidelines support and must be read in conjunction with the following:

- *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*
- VPMP Crime reporting and investigations
- VPMP OHS Fundamental obligations

Application

Procedures and Guidelines are provided to support the interpretation and application of rules and responsibilities. They include recommended good practices and assessment tools to help employees make lawful, ethical and professional decisions. Employees should use the **Professional and ethical standards** to inform the decisions they make to support interpretation of Procedures and Guidelines.

Procedures and Guidelines are not mandatory requirements on their own. However, where rules and responsibilities state that employees must have regard to Procedures and Guidelines, the Procedures and Guidelines must be used to help make decisions in support of the rules.

Procedures and Guidelines

1. Spot testing of drugs

1.1 Introduction

Field drug spot testing kits are used by operational members to obtain a presumptive identification of suspected drugs. The kits provide an indication of the class of drugs that a substance may fall within. Where a result is obtained it is used to assist with the laying of appropriate charges.

1.2 Use of kits

- Only field drug spot testing kits approved by the Forensic Drug Branch (FDB), Forensic Services Department (FSD) are to be used by members.
- The testing kits can only be used to test for the presence of amphetamine type substances (including 'ecstasy'), opiates or cocaine.

- The kits are designed for testing tablets and powders not liquids.
- The use of the kits and subsequent handling of drug items must be done under the supervision of a sub officer.

1.3 Authorised members

- Kits may only be used by members that have qualified on the online 'How to use a drug spot test kit' training package. In order to maintain proficiency in the use of the kits the on-line qualification must be renewed annually. The process described in the online training is to be followed to undertake the test and interpret the results. Divisional Commanders are responsible for ensuring adequate numbers of members are qualified to conduct the testing.
- To ensure consistency suitably qualified Crime Scene Officers (CSO) should perform the testing where possible. Where the use of a CSO is impractical for operational reasons, patrol supervisors (265/251) can authorise appropriately qualified members from investigative units (CIU/DRU) to perform the testing.

1.4 Criteria for usage

Members are to seek the authority of a sub-officer prior to using a field drug spot test kit. A spot test is not required where:

- Full admissions are made in relation to the drug
- No admissions are made but the type of drug is indicated by supporting intelligence (surveillance / telephone intercepts) or the prior history of offender or the presentation of the exhibit
- The drug is liquid.

1.5 Limitation of results

Members are to be aware of the limitations when using field drug spot testing kits namely:

- A spot test provides information as to the possible class of drug present and does not confirm the presence of any particular drug.
- Many substances give a colour change with the spot test reagents. Some of these are drugs. Conversely, not all drugs give a colour change with the spot test reagents. It is important to remember
 - a positive spot test result does not confirm the presence of a scheduled drug
 - a negative spot test result (no colour change or an unexpected colour change) does not mean that no scheduled drugs are present

- liquid samples and steroids (whether liquid or solid) are not able to be spot tested.
- The result of a spot test is not evidentiary and should only be used as an investigative tool
- The kits only test for the drug types previously mentioned

Where there are doubts about the interpretation of the results seek advice from the FDB.

1.6 Recording use of Test kits

- In line with **VPMG Recording of operational duties** members should take sufficient notes including the following when a field drug spot test kit is used:
 - Date, time and place of test
 - Persons present during testing
 - Test kit used
 - Result obtained including type of drug class (if positive)
 - Property book number where applicable
 - Where the drug is contained in a tamper evident audit bag (TEAB) the number of the original TEAB and the number of the new TEAB the drug is placed into at the end of the testing.
 - The notes should be countersigned by the supervising sub-officer and retained as contemporaneous notes
- Security of the test resources and information collected are to be assured against loss and unauthorised access at all times
- If the original TEAB does not contain any drug residue it should be destroyed and disposed of. Where the drug residue is present the original TEAB should be sealed in the new TEAB with the drug.

2. OHS considerations

2.1 Safety considerations

Field drug spot testing kits contain chemicals that can cause injury to members if not handled correctly.

- The kits contain glass ampoules that are required to be broken for the chemical reaction to take place
- Wear gloves (In cases where other evidence e.g. DNA, fingerprints are a consideration gloves and masks must be worn)
- Ensure the kits are not to be carried on the person in pants pockets etc where they may break

- Store the kits in a secure location at a police premises

2.2 *Handling of used kits*

Ensure used kits are disposed of by placing in an appropriate container (glass jar with metal lid or plastic sharps container). Kits may be disposed in accordance with local arrangements for sharps containers or returned to FDB or the Drug Exhibit Management Unit (DEMU) at FSD. Kits returned to FSD are to be taken in person. DX or other types of postage are not to be used.

3. Governance responsibilities

3.1 *Forensic Services Department*

- Responsible for the approving the type of field drug spot testing kits to be used by Victoria Police.
- Responsible for developing and reviewing training for the use of field drug spot testing kits. This training is to be reviewed annually.

3.2 *Work Unit Managers*

- Responsible for ensuring only members trained in the use of field drug spot testing kits can use or access them.
- Responsible for keeping a record on the issue of the kits within their work unit

Further Advice and Information

For further advice and assistance regarding these Procedures and Guidelines, contact the Forensic Drug Branch, Forensic Services Department

Update history

Date of first issue	03/02/2014 FF 083 477	
Date updated	Summary of change	Force File number