Background

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) was created by the Minnesota Legislature in 1927 to assist peace officers throughout the state in solving crimes and apprehending criminals. The division of statistics, forerunner of the Criminal Justice Information Services Section (CJIS), was added in 1935, as were additional personnel and full police power for the Bureau’s agents. The addition of personnel made the establishment of field offices throughout Minnesota possible. In 1947, the BCA laboratory became operational and began examining evidence. In 1969, the BCA, along with several other state agencies, became a member of the newly created Department of Public Safety.

One of the first DNA laboratories in the country was established at the BCA in 1990. Shortly thereafter, the BCA laboratory became the first in the country to identify a suspect based solely on DNA. The BCA was also the first state agency in the country to implement an Automated Fingerprint Identification System.

The BCA serves as a national model with its Missing Persons Clearinghouse, the Minnesota Crime Alert Network, the AMBER Alert program, and its efforts to integrate criminal justice information. In 2004, the BCA became one of four laboratories in the nation selected by the FBI to serve as a regional mitochondrial DNA laboratory. Today, the Minnesota BCA is headquartered in St. Paul, has a regional office in Bemidji and 10 investigative field offices around the state. Laboratories are located in St. Paul and Bemidji.

Mission Statement

The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension protects Minnesotans and all who visit our state by providing services to prevent and solve crimes in partnership with law enforcement, public safety and other criminal justice agencies.

Budget

With an annual budget of over $50 million and a staff of 350, the BCA’s four divisions are funded through a mix of General Fund appropriations, Special Revenue Funds and Federal Funds.
Administrative Services

AMBER Alert – This BCA-run system is instantly available to local law enforcement agencies when a child has been abducted. Once activated, the AMBER network transmits alerts to every media outlet, law enforcement agency, the Department of Transportation, thousands of businesses, cell phones and secondary distributors to help locate an abducted child in serious danger.

Crime Prevention, Crime Watch and DARE – Provides technical assistance, literature and training coordination for over 300 crime prevention officers and civilians throughout Minnesota.

Criminal Justice Information - Training is provided on the use, access and dissemination of criminal justice information.

Internet Safety Education Program – Training, education and resources are provided throughout the state to law enforcement, educators, communities, parents and children.

Statewide Duty Officer Program - The statewide Duty Officers are on call 24/7 to assist local, state and federal agencies in cases of emergency disasters or major events.

Operations Center - Provide resources and assistance to agents in the field, monitor and send law enforcement messages, oversee the state’s deconfliction program and provide building security.

Management Program - These programs provide challenging and informative courses for criminal justice professionals aspiring to become supervisors, newly promoted to a management position or those currently in leadership roles in their organizations.

From identifying the ethical dilemmas faced by criminal justice professionals, to inspiring employees and developing future leaders, these courses focus on the many strategies and skills needed to handle the challenges of managing their departments and accomplishing the mission of their organizations.

Minnesota Crime Alert Network – Local law enforcement agencies throughout the state use this network to send crime alerts via fax and email to thousands of businesses, media and community members warning them about crimes or criminals and seeking their assistance in solving cases.

Missing and Unidentified Persons Clearinghouse – This unit works with local law enforcement agencies and medical examiners on missing and unidentified persons cases, to locate and identify individuals. This unit coordinates DNA collection for entry into a national database and maintains a statewide missing and unidentified persons database.

Forensic Science Training - Scientists provide instruction to law enforcement on the collection of physical evidence from crime scenes, basic and advanced latent fingerprinting, arson investigation and drug investigation.

Investigative Training – Training is provided in over 80 courses to more than 4,000 law enforcement and criminal justice professionals throughout Minnesota. Supervision, leadership and management training courses are also provided.

Forensic Science Services

Forensic Science Service — Laboratory scientists perform scientific examinations of physical evidence recovered from crime scenes, conduct research and provide expert witness testimony at trial.

Drug Laboratory — Scientists analyze and identify drugs. This identification is an essential element in proving controlled substance crimes.

Nuclear DNA Laboratory - Scientists examine and identify blood, semen, saliva and other body fluids. Nuclear DNA testing then leads to DNA identification, one of the most powerful forensic tools available to link a suspect to a crime.

Mitochondrial & Missing Persons DNA Labs — The BCA operates federally-funded mitochondrial and missing persons DNA laboratories. Evidence from around the country is analyzed. Twenty percent of staff time is dedicated to Minnesota cases. Mitochondrial DNA is the “DNA of last resort” and can be critical when no nuclear DNA is found. The missing persons DNA lab examines remains in missing persons cases from all over the country for Nuclear DNA.

Combined DNA Indexing System (CODIS) — A DNA offender database is used to search DNA profiles obtained from evidence in cases where there are no suspects. The state database is connected to the National DNA Index System.

Firearms Laboratory — Scientists conduct examinations related to firearms, tool mark comparisons and serial number restorations.

National Integrated Ballistics Identification Network (NIBIN) — The lab maintains a cartridge case image database through a cooperative agreement with the ATF. The system is used to link firearms related cases.

Fingerprint Laboratory – Scientists develop and compare unknown fingerprints recovered from crime scenes with elimination and suspect prints for identification. Fingerprints are still the most used forensic tool to place a subject at the scene of a crime.

Midwest Automated Fingerprint Identification Network (MAFIN) — A three-state database of known prints and unidentified prints from crime scenes. Unknown prints are searched against the current...
database and all new arrestees are searched against the unsolved latent database.

**Breath Alcohol Testing Laboratory** — Scientists train and certify law enforcement personnel in breath alcohol testing procedures. The BCA lab owns and provides testing instruments to law enforcement throughout the state. This program is a key element in the timely detection of DWI offenders.

**Toxicology Laboratory** – Scientists analyze blood, urine and other biological samples for alcohol and other drugs. This analysis is essential in proving DWI offenses.

**Documents Laboratory** — Scientists provide handwriting analysis as well as other scientific examinations relating to documents.

**Trace Laboratory** — Scientists compare known and unknown samples of glass, paint, fibers, wood, soil and other materials. Other examinations include comparisons of shoe prints and tire tracks, physical matches of separated objects and testing to determine the presence of accelerants in fire debris.

**Crime Scene Service** — Scientists identify and collect physical evidence from death scenes throughout the state. Teams from both St. Paul and Bemidji are available 24/7.

**Accreditation**– BCA laboratories are accredited by the American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors/Laboratory Accreditation Board. This distinguished accreditation demonstrates that management, personnel, operational and technical procedures, equipment and physical facilities meet national standards. Accreditation is one part of a quality assurance program to ensure that the best services possible are provided.

### Investigative Services

**BCA Special Agents and Analysts** — Employees are strategically positioned in ten field offices and two regional offices around the state. Investigative assistance is provided 24/7 to 87 sheriff’s departments and over 400 local police departments. Services include immediate investigative, analytical, crime scene and special operations responses, and longer term assistance with complex investigations. These are essential services that many law enforcement agencies throughout the state cannot support locally.

**Cold Case Assistance** — Agents and analysts work with local law enforcement to investigate old homicide cases. New forensic advancements are utilized to solve these cases.

**Internet Crimes Against Children** – This unit targets offenders who use online technology to sexually exploit children. Investigative assistance and computer forensics are provided. The BCA coordinates and oversees the operations of the statewide ICAC Task Force. In 2009 the task force handled over 200 child pornography or online sexual solicitation cybertips received from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

**Minnesota Joint Analysis Center (MNJAC)** – The MNJAC, Minnesota’s designated fusion center collects, evaluates, analyzes and disseminates information regarding organized criminal, terrorist and all-hazards activity. MNJAC provides a state-based point of contact to coordinate information sharing between federal, state and local agencies (www.icefishx.org).

**Predatory Offender Registration (POR) Program** – This unit maintains records on over 17,000 registered predatory offenders. That information is available to law enforcement and corrections agencies via a secure website. Agents assist local law enforcement with tracking and prosecuting non-compliant offenders and with investigating sexual assaults. The POR Unit maintains a website which identifies non-compliant registrants and allows the public to submit tips regarding their possible locations (www.por.state.mn.us).

**Technical Support/Special Operations** - This unit provides expertise in the use of a wide range of covert investigative techniques, including the use of undercover operatives, a variety of surveillance techniques, and the design and installation of covertly deployed surveillance equipment. In 2009 this unit was responsible for the safe recovery of missing persons as well as the apprehension of violent fugitives and non-compliant sex offenders.
Minnesota Justice Information Services (MNJIS)

Criminal Justice Data Communication Network (CJDN) – Data are available through the BCA as the state’s centralized network of criminal justice information. Access to multiple information systems and services is available through the CJDN for criminal justice purposes. Major systems accessible through the CJDN include:

- PS Portals: Warrants, Gangs and Orders for Protection Files, MN Computerized Criminal History data, Driver and Vehicle Services Files and Photos, National Crime Information Center data, National Law Enforcement Telecommunications System data
- Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos
- eCharging
- Predatory Offender Registry
- Comprehensive Incident-Based Reporting System
- Permit Tracking System
- Criminal History Record Maintenance System
- Integrated Search Service

Criminal History Background Checks and Criminal History Information - Staff performs statutorily required and discretionary criminal history background checks. The Minnesota CCH and, in some cases, the FBI’s fingerprint-based records are searched. Staff also maintains and administers three components of Minnesota criminal history information. The first is the Computerized Criminal History system – Minnesota’s repository of criminal history records including arrests, court dispositions, probation, and incarceration data. The second is the Minnesota Repository of Arrest Photos—a centralized database of arrest photos that permits searches by characteristics, has facial recognition capabilities and can be used for photo line-ups. And finally, the Public Access – public criminal history information is available for free at the BCA or via the Internet.

Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program – Data about crimes and arrests, police officers killed in action, shots fired, pursuits, bias-motivated crimes and gun permits are published annually and reported to the FBI along with the Minnesota Crime Statistics Report.

Fingerprint Services – Fingerprint technicians fingerprint individuals for background checks, immigration and adoption purposes, maintain fingerprint images stored in the Automated Fingerprint Identification System for future comparisons, process criminal fingerprints, make identifications and forward data to the FBI for maintenance and comparison at the national level.

LiveScan technology allows for fingerprint images to be transmitted electronically to BCA for comparison within minutes of a booking. The mobile Two-Finger Identification System transmits fingerprints electronically to the BCA. Search results are returned to an officer on the street within minutes.

Technical Support - The MNJIS Service Desk offers support in gaining access, trouble-shooting and other technical assistance to criminal justice practitioners statewide.

Auditing Criminal Justice Information Systems – Auditors ensure compliance with state and federal laws and procedures and provide assistance regarding access, use and dissemination of criminal justice information.

Information Integration — Staff facilitates the integration of Minnesota’s criminal justice information systems through agencies sharing critical information at key decision points throughout the criminal justice process. MNJIS has a major role in fostering collaboration among state and local criminal justice agencies, providing the architecture systems and services for the statewide aggregation and distribution of criminal justice information, developing technical and business standards for criminal justice agencies to model, and providing financial and planning assistance to local agencies for integration efforts.

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