

Pipe bomb DNA sampling with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Bomb Unit.

Submitted by Teresa Harris, Montgomery County Sheriff's Office Public Information Assistant

Can good DNA samples be collected after blowing the endcap off of a galvanized pipe bomb? That is the question members of the MCSO Bomb Unit and a local forensic research analyst sought to answer. MCSO Lt. Allen Stewart, Cpl. Richard Miles and Dep. Andrew Noto collaborated with Megan Boll, a trained technician from NMS Labs, at the Montgomery County Fire Academy last week to conduct their new experiment.

The experiment began with gathering 10 galvanized pipe bombs that Miles made himself. Stewart, Noto and Miles set up the first pipe bomb in a specially built protected PAN Pit. Shock tube, filled with an explosive powder, was attached to the PAN (Percussion Actuated Non-electric, resembling a shotgun), and aimed at the edge of the endcap of the pipe bomb using a laser. Each time, the shock tube was rolled out to a safe distance from the pit. After the area was cleared for safety, the shock tube was activated using a push-button detonator. Boll, with face mask and gloves, went into the pit after each endcap was blown off to carefully collect the evidence in bags marked "evidence" that were immediately sealed and boxed for later analysis.

NMS Labs is a world-class organization known for its expertise, tests and services. Boll's DNA collection research from bomb scenes will be a part of thousands of other studies at NMS Labs that supports hospitals and universities, law enforcement, attorneys and medical examiners. Boll's work helps the Bomb Unit too. While there may be more than one way to render safe any bomb, data collection at the scene is just as critical in finding evidence and perpetrators.

The results of the experiment have not yet been completed. But, it is this process of trial and error that the Bomb Unit continues to focus on in their efforts to stay ahead of the curve when it comes to training.



PHOTO: Lt. Allen Stewart, Dep. Andrew Noto and Cpl. Rick Miles stage the scene.



PHOTO: All evidence is collected and ready to be studied!



PHOTO: NMS Labs tech Megan Boll, Lt. Allen Stewart, Dep. Andrew Noto and Cpl. Rick Miles develop their plan and build the staging.

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