



A Tool For The Sentinels



Thermo Scientific™ TruNarc™
Handheld Narcotics Analyzer.

The duty of a sentinel is to stand guard, to watch over its community and provide notice of danger. The Sentinel Project, an initiative of the Arkansas Opioid Recovery Project (ARORP), does just that: it looks out for the public health of Arkansas residents by tracking and reporting opioid-related cases.

Kirk Lane, the director of ARORP, is always on the lookout for ways to better protect the residents of his Arkansas community and get faster answers during investigations. Lab-testing a narcotic found at a crime scene or seized during a traffic stop can involve a 90 to 120 day turnaround, and within sprawling state bureaucracies, the flow of information can be even slower than that. “Usually we don’t get trend data until it may be one or two years old, and that doesn’t help us,” said Lane. “We’re trying to figure out things today and move forward to really protect our communities.”

Lane’s mission to track opioid trends in Arkansas led him to the Thermo Scientific™ TruNarc™ Handheld Narcotics Analyzer, developed by Thermo Fisher Scientific.

“We first learned about TruNarc through different testing facilities or different agencies that were utilizing this device, trying to find a better way than the old little folding envelope test kits,” Lane explained. The Sentinel Project was looking for equipment “where we could get that presumptive evidence and testing in a more speedy process, and improve investigations.”

The Sentinel Project purchased 33 units, which were distributed to participating agencies around Arkansas. Participants are required to report their findings on a monthly basis. Those reports are compiled by the state drug director’s office and published on a quarterly basis. This way, Lane explains, “people can find out what trends are showing up, closer to real time. Also, if we spot something unusual—a new data trend or a new substance trend—we can put resources to that immediately.” Sometimes agencies will add additional related information to the Sentinel reports, such as state crime lab or death data. “For the first time, we’re getting data that’s closer to real time,” noted Lane. “This has caused us to feel urgency. It’s really bringing together some agencies to do a better job in their investigations.”



Kirk Lane, director of the ARORP at a Sentinel Project press conference.

Beyond the equipment

In addition to cutting-edge analytical instrumentation, Thermo Fisher Scientific provides ongoing support to all our customers. To ensure you can get the most out of our equipment, we supply the training necessary to operate efficiently and achieve your goals.

Kirk Lane attests to this level of service personally: “It’s been fantastic. I mean the [Thermo Fisher experts] came in and trained. We were able to put that training out there. They’ve answered questions.”

The support has not been limited to new purchases. “Even folks that had a TruNarc from one source or another, or that bought them on their own, they were updated and we got all these issues and things resolved,” Lane effused. “So the devices are all being utilized as they should be.”

The TruNarc’s substantial reporting features make this process seamless. The handheld narcotics analyzer automatically captures all scan results, including time-and-date stamps and system self-checks. “No more is a result left up to user interpretation,” Lane said. “Rather, an analysis is scientifically measured and recorded in a secure database all in the device itself. This adds integrity to the field test analysis process.” TruNarc analyzer test results are robust enough that, depending on the jurisdiction, they may be allowed at legal hearings.

Once a suspected drug is safely analyzed—the instrument can analyze samples through plastic or glass, minimizing chances of contamination—the full results are stored for reporting and evidence submission. These results can be downloaded from the analyzer and forwarded to any interested authorities. The officials using TruNarc analyzers will still send physical evidence to the lab for confirmation, but the TruNarc reports provide presumptive evidence that can be acted upon immediately. “It’s all right there. Now we have a starting point that day, that minute, instead of three or four months from now.”

With the public consciousness around drugs changing from a purely criminal issue to including public safety and public health, Lane has witnessed first-hand how this reporting can help. “For a long time, a death investigation into an overdose was almost non-existent. If somebody died of an overdose, that was pretty much it. It resulted in a one-page police report and nobody found anyone who was held responsible. Families never got any information. It was just written off.” The utility of the compiled knowledge extends beyond the investigations by state and local officials: Sometimes, knowing just a little bit more about a terrible situation can be a real relief to anyone affected.

Arkansas’ Sentinel Project and its data-driven advances made possible by the use of TruNarc analyzers is aiming to change the way states approach the opioid epidemic. In his role as the leader of the Sentinel Project, Lane humbly strives to live up to his charge. “We’re just trying to protect the community better.”



The future of narcotics identification

The Thermo Scientific™ TruNarc™ Handheld Narcotics Analyzer has been trusted for over a decade by law enforcement and government agencies worldwide. Now, the Thermo Scientific™ TruNarc™ Delta and Tau expand on that legacy with a continuously updated library that contains over 1200 substances, performance improvements for faster readings, improved differentiation of fentanyl and methamphetamine with the H2 Kit, and more.

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