smiths detection

WHITE PAPER

Trace Detection Can Find Narcotics In Prisons

By swabbing an inmate's hands or belongings, COs can use the IONSCAN™ 600 to determine if an inmate has had contact with narcotics

The opioid crisis is affecting nearly every corner of America. Correctional facilities are no exception. Inmates and their associates are endlessly inventive when it comes to smuggling drugs and other contraband items into jails and prisons. Behind bars, these substances can be incredibly disruptive, as well as dangerous to the health of inmates and staff alike.

Trace detection systems such as the IONSCAN™ 600 from Smiths Detection provides an additional layer of security to help correctional facilities keep dangerous drugs, such as Suboxone®, heroin or fentanyl, from finding their way behind bars.

Keeping order and safety is paramount for corrections administrators. Thorough screening and search processes are necessary to prevent contraband from entering a facility, as well as to detect and confiscate drugs that do manage to make their way behind bars. A variety of strategies and technologies, such as trace detection, can help correctional officers perform more efficient and effective searches for contraband drugs.

APPLY AIRPORT-STYLE SCREENING TOOLS

If you've passed through security at an airport recently, you've probably seen the detection method where hands and bags are wiped with a small swab that is then scanned for traces of explosives or other prohibited substances. This same method of trace detection can provide a simple, noninvasive way to find out if inmates have been handling illicit substances such as Suboxone or fentanyl.

The IONSCAN™ 600 from Smiths Detection is one tool for accomplishing these kinds of scans. The unit can detect a wide range of narcotics, including opioids, and it is sensitive enough to distinguish between different varieties of the same drug, including heroin and fentanyl analogues.

Originally designed to detect explosives, the IONSCAN™ 600 requires little training to operate effectively. Simply wipe an inmate's hands or belongings with a disposable swab, then insert the swab into the unit to determine if the inmate has been handling narcotics. If the unit indicates a positive detection result, the unit will identify the particular narcotic that is has found. The detection of a trace amount of a narcotic can provide reasonable suspicion that the inmate is hiding a narcotic on their person, internally, or within their belongings. A positive result can also raise suspicion that the inmate has been involved in a transaction involving narcotics. The unit comes with USB connectivity or an optional built-in printer to provide a tangible record of results. Analysis can be done at key points of entry for contraband, such as after visitations or when inmates re-enter the facility after work release or other transports. The swabs also can be used to analyze cell contents, mail, deliveries and visitors' hands or belongings.

IMPROVE SAFETY FOR CORRECTIONS STAFF

Trace detection that uses swab analysis can improve safety for corrections staff in addition to helping facilities catch smugglers. Exposure to potent narcotics, particularly fentanyl and its analogues, is a growing concern for COs. When trace particles of fentanyl become airborne, a CO can inadvertently breathe in the particles and experience respiratory arrest or other life-threatening overdose symptoms.

By analyzing the surfaces of suspicious containers and personal belongings before they are opened, trace detection can help a CO determine if there is a hidden danger inside. Wearing personal protective equipment in accordance to your facility's procedures can further reduce the potential for exposure.

Once the operator swabs an object or surface, the swab is simply inserted into the system by following on-screen prompts, and the screen displays the results within seconds, adds FitzGerald. When a threat is detected, the screen turns red and indicates that a threat has been found.

IMPROVE EFFICIENCY OF SEARCHES

Even the most thorough manual searches may miss items concealed inside the body. Trace detection can help COs search more efficiently by identifying inmates for follow-up. The IONSCAN™ 600 returns results within seconds for quick decision-making. This means COs can focus on those individuals determined to have been handling illicit drugs and reduce the time spent searching other inmates.

At 24 pounds, the unit is portable, and it can be operated on battery power for added mobility. This makes it easy to move around a facility to where it's needed at any given time. For example, the unit can be kept in the inmate intake area but positioned at the visitors' entrance during visiting hours.

Keeping order and safety behind bars is crucial for corrections administrators, and thorough screening and search processes are necessary to prevent contraband from entering or circulating within a facility. Trace detection with a tool like the IONSCAN™ 600 provides an additional layer to help correctional facilities keep dangerous drugs, such as Suboxone, heroin or fentanyl, from finding their way behind bars and into inmates' hands.

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