

Survey of explosives contamination in the environment

News story

Dstl scientists will be conducting a routine survey, which is not connected to any specific threat.



Scientists from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) will shortly conduct an environmental survey across a number of different locations to detect and identify traces of explosives that are present in the general environment. The data is used to understand the level of explosive traces in our environment and can be used to interpret evidence gathered at potential crime scenes to aid the criminal justice system and maintain the security of the UK.

Surveys such as this are routine and this work is not connected to any specific threat.

The location types to be sampled are:

- taxis
- buses
- trains and underground trains
- train and underground stations
- airports
- passenger aircraft
- stadia
- shopping centres
- hotels
- town and city centres

To prevent contamination of the sample locations, personnel undertaking the survey will be fully suited in protective clothing. The sampling techniques used are non-invasive, non-toxic and leave no residue.

The collected samples will be analysed at the Dstl [Forensic Explosives](#)

[Laboratory \(FEL\)](#), an internationally recognised leading authority in the detection and identification of explosive traces.

FEL staff attend scenes of crime relating to explosives, and painstakingly analyse evidence using advanced analytical techniques to identify minute traces of explosives. These traces are as small as a billionth of a gram, approximately 100,000x smaller than a single grain of sugar and present no explosive risk to the general public.

FEL is accredited by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) to ISO 17025:2017 and is in compliance with the Forensic Science Regulator's Codes of Practice and Conduct (FSR CoPC).

The environmental background sampling will ensure that the UK continues to keep pace with the ever-evolving threat. The programme is funded by the Home Office.

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