

\$67 Million BCA Crime Lab to Boost Justice in Southern Minnesota

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MANKATO, Minn. – A new \$67 million Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) crime lab will be built in Mankato, bringing faster forensic services to southern Minnesota. The 56,000-square-foot facility, planned near the Blue Earth County Justice Center, is expected to open by late 2026.

Currently, Minnesota's BCA operates crime labs only in St. Paul and Bemidji. The new lab will add 50 agents and 150 staff members to handle evidence testing, cybercrime

investigations, financial forensics, and more. This will help reduce the backlog of cases and speed up investigations outside the Twin Cities.

Brown County Attorney Chuck Hanson said the lab will be a valuable resource for local law enforcement. “This will result in quicker turnaround times for criminal investigations,” Hanson said. “The proximity and extra staff should ease current delays.”

Law enforcement officials in southern Minnesota shared similar views. New Ulm Police Senior Investigator Chris Moellenhoff said, “A 30-minute drive to Mankato is much better than driving two hours to St. Paul. This will save time and help solve cases faster.”

Transporting evidence, such as locked cell phones or blood samples, often requires officers to travel to St. Paul because mailing such items is not always possible. The new lab will allow faster delivery and processing of these sensitive materials.

The Mankato facility will include labs for drug chemistry, DNA analysis, and digital media, and will serve as a training center for law enforcement. The BCA has seen a large increase in certain types of cases: cybercrime tips involving exploited children are up 353% in five years, and fentanyl-related evidence submissions have more than doubled since 2010.

The BCA works closely with the FBI, the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children, and other agencies to investigate crimes, issue alerts, and share data.

With the new lab, southern Minnesota agencies expect faster results, less backlog, and improved support to help keep communities safe. Groundbreaking is expected in mid-2025, with the lab operational by late 2026.

This investment marks an important step toward providing modern forensic services across the state and helping law enforcement respond more quickly to growing crime challenges.