

This article is over 5 years old

## NEWS

# Harris County Officially Opens New State Of The Art Institute Of Forensic Sciences

The facility will serve both as a crime lab and as the medical examiner's office.

ALVARO 'AL' ORTIZ | POSTED ON MARCH 16, 2017, 4:04 PM (LAST UPDATED: MARCH 16, 2017, 5:02 PM)



*Dr. Luis Sanchez, HCIFS executive director and chief medical examiner, delivers remarks at the new facility's auditorium. (Photo Credit: Al Ortiz)*



*Harris County Judge Ed Emmett (center) attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at the new Institute of Forensic Sciences. (Photo Credit: Al Ortiz)*



*This photo shows the Institute's toxicology lab.  
(Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS) (Photo Credit: Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS)*



*This photo shows one of the rooms where medical examiners conduct autopsies.(Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS) (Photo Credit: Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS)*



*The new Institute of Forensic Sciences is located in the Texas Medical Center and it is a state of the art nine story building (Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS) (Photo Credit: Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS)*



*The new Institute of Forensic Sciences is located in the Texas Medical Center and it is a state of the art nine story building. (Photo Credit: Photo: Courtesy of the HCIFS)*

The greater Houston region now has a sophisticated asset to investigate and solve crimes with the official opening of the new Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences (HCIFS).

Harris County Judge Ed Emmett and other dignitaries, including Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan, attended a ribbon cutting ceremony at the new facility on Thursday March 16<sup>th</sup>.

The Institute is located in the Texas Medical Center and it is an impressive state of the art nine story building.

Funded by a bond that was approved by the voters back in 2007, Harris County has invested 75 million dollars in it.

The facility serves both as a crime lab and as the medical examiner's office.

Among other tasks, its staff will perform autopsies for cases investigated by the Harris County Sheriff's Office (HCSO) and the Houston Police Department (HPD).

Doctor Dwayne Wolf, deputy chief medical examiner at the HCIFS, explains that "about 11,000 deaths are reported to our office every year, of which we bring in 5,000 bodies for examination, either for autopsy or external examination."

Wolf adds that one of the advantages of the new building is it has a bigger morgue which is also better lit and ventilated than the one they had before.

Edison Toquica, chief deputy with the HCSO, thinks the new facility will improve their work because "it's going to really speed up the process," including investigations related to DNA and firearms, among other things.

The Institute is staffed with more than 200 professionals and began full operations on March 6<sup>th</sup>.