

Rape kits get DNA upgrade, 'SVU' star

By BILL SANDERSON

October 22, 2009 — Two decades after their first use in New York emergency rooms, rape testing kits are being updated for the DNA age.

State officials today will unveil the new kits — which also include instructions on collecting evidence of assaults on men.

They come with a training video narrated by Mariska Hargitay, who plays a detective on the TV show "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit."

"The kit is more comprehensive than it used to be. We have learned what works and what doesn't," said Susan Xenarios of St. Luke's and Roosevelt Hospitals, which helped develop the new equipment.

The kits include special envelopes and swabs to collect bodily fluids and other evidence



NBC: Mariska Hargitay on "SVU."

that might contain an attacker's DNA.

"Everything comes ready made, so you don't miss a beat," said Xenarios.

There also are new step-by-step instructions to help doctors and nurses properly collect evidence — adding four steps to what will

now be a 15-step process.

The kits will also include advice to help hospital staffs deal with male victims.

Nationally, about one in eight sex assault victims are men — but in New York, the ratio is much higher, Xenarios said.