



INDIANAPOLIS-MARION COUNTY FORENSIC SERVICES AGENCY

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EVIDENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

FIREARMS EVIDENCE

I. ANALYSIS CONDUCTED BY THE FIREARMS SECTION

A. EXAMINATION OF FIREARMS FOR FUNCTION AND SAFETY

Firearms can be submitted for a function test. This would include test firing to obtain test fired bullets, cartridge cases or shot shells. Trigger pull can also be tested if requested.

B. COMPARISON OF AMMUNITION COMPONENTS

The following ammunition components can be compared to determine if they were or were not fired in the same firearm or a particular submitted firearm.

1. Fired bullets
2. Fired bullet fragments
3. Fired cartridge cases
4. Fired shotshells

C. EXAMINATION / CHARACTERIZATION OF FIRED BULLETS

Fired bullets or bullet fragments can be characterized for caliber and possibly make/type of firearm involved.

D. NIBIN EVALUATION, ENTRY AND CORRELATIONS

Suitable NIBIN criteria fired cartridge cases and test shots from firearms recovered will be entered into the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) to be searched against other cases. NIBIN leads (potential hits) will be disseminated.

1. NIBIN criteria firearms are all centerfire semiautomatic/full automatic pistols, 223 Remington / 5.56 x 45mm and 7.62 x 39mm rifles, 300 Blackout, 12 Gauge semiautomatic and pump action shotguns, and other guns found in semiautomatic/full automatic pistol calibers.
2. NIBIN criteria fired cartridges cases are all the calibers covered in the above mentioned guideline.
3. Bullets are not entered into NIBIN.

E. SERIAL NUMBER RESTORATIONS

Obliterated serial numbers or other markings on firearms or other objects can be restored.

II. FIREARMS

A. SAFETY AND EVIDENTIARY CONCERNS

Always render a firearm safe to handle before proceeding with further investigation or examination. **Take actions to preserve any possible DNA, trace**

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and/or latent print (fingerprint) evidence that may be present and of interest, according to section II, B, 4. of this document.

1. Keep the firearm unloaded at all times, if possible.
2. If a firearm cannot be unloaded, notify laboratory personnel (and Property Room personnel, if applicable) prior to submission. A contact number is provided in this document.
3. When it is suspected that firearms being collected have been contaminated with biological fluids, it is extremely important that (at minimum) gloves be worn when recovering and packaging this evidence. Personal protective equipment such as eye protection, lab coat, and mask are recommended in addition to the gloves. **The outermost packaging shall be labeled with a biohazard sticker.**
4. All biological stains should be treated as biohazard, and universal bloodborne pathogen precautions should be taken.

B. UNLOADING THE FIREARM

1. **Semiautomatics / Full-Automatics:** Note the positions of any manual safety devices or cocking indicators. Carefully disengage the magazine and remove it from the firearm. Open the action and visually check the chamber for a cartridge or fired cartridge case. If possible, lock the slide to the rear and insert a plastic zip-tie into the ejection port and down through the magazine well. Then carefully release the slide forward and engage any manual safety devices that may be on the firearm.
2. **Shotguns and Rifles:** These are handled in a similar manner as the handguns listed above. Safety and preservation of physical evidence should always be considered.
3. **Revolvers:** If cocked, cautiously de-cock the firearm using the knurled areas if possible. **Preferably using a permanent marker, make two marks on the cylinder, one on each side of the top strap, to indicate the chamber that is in the firing position.** If un-cocked, these marks will indicate the chamber found indexed in front of the firing pin. Your notes should contain the following information:
 - a. Appearance of cylinder as recovered with a diagram of which chamber is which and which direction the cylinder rotates. Example:

<u>Chamber</u>	<u>Condition</u>	<u>Headstamp</u>
#1	Fired	U. S. Cartridge Co.
#2	Fired	Remington Arms Co.
#3	Fired	Winchester Repeating Arms Co.
#4	Unfired	Dominion Cartridge Co.
#5	Loaded	Western Cartridge Co.
#6	Loaded	Peters Cartridge Co.

4. **DNA, Latent Prints, and Trace Evidence:**
 - a. Wear gloves when handling evidence to be submitted for latent print processing.
 - b. Proper precautions should be taken to ensure the integrity of DNA testing. Clean disposable gloves and masks should be worn when evidence that may be submitted for DNA analysis is handled and collected. Gloves must be changed between each piece of evidence being handled. Furthermore, the evidence should not come into contact

with surfaces (directly or indirectly) or be exposed to environments that may lead to DNA contamination. **Improper handling and exposure can lead to compromised results when coupled with very sensitive testing conducted by the laboratory.**

- c. After the firearm is in a safe condition, examine it for trace material; i.e. blood, hair, fiber, tissue. If in doubt about proper handling/processing, contact laboratory personnel before proceeding.

D. PACKAGING

The purpose of correctly packaging firearms is to protect the breech face and bore from damage.

1. Put a plastic zip tie through the action of the firearm. Do not put zip tie through the barrel.
2. Attach an evidence tag to the trigger guard, if desired.
3. Firearms should not be dismantled or cleaned before packaging as this could alter their evidentiary value.
4. DO NOT place metal in the bore, breech or magazine well.
5. Loaded magazines and unfired cartridges should be removed and secured with the associated firearm.
 - a. If the magazine is in the firearm, it may be included in the same exhibit as the firearm for submission to the laboratory; however, if it is not found in the firearm it should be submitted as a separate item.
 - b. If DNA/latent fingerprint processing is requested, the cartridges may be left in the magazine but should not be left in the chamber.
 - c. Any cartridges (in a magazine or not) should be secured within the firearms container to ensure they cannot roll into the chamber of the firearm.
6. Legibly mark the contents of each package (include case number, contents, date of recovery, etc.).
7. Outermost packaging must be properly sealed with date and initials.
8. Firearms should be packaged in a box. Other items can be packaged in envelopes, boxes or paper bags.
9. Firearms recovered in water should be submitted in a watertight container of the same water. However, the Firearms Section shall be contacted prior to submission to expedite water repellent procedures. Additionally, the Firearms Section shall be advised of the loaded condition of the firearm.
10. **The packaging of loaded firearms shall be marked WARNING: LOADED FIREARM (as well as contacting laboratory/Property Room personnel).**

III. PROJECTILES

A. COLLECTION

Projectile(s) should always be handled with the utmost care to avoid destroying the microscopic striations.

1. A visual examination of each bullet should occur to preserve obvious blood, fluid, etc.
2. Projectile(s) from a Person or Body:
X-rays should be taken to locate the position of the projectile(s). They should be removed with rubber-tipped/plastic or non-marring utensils to prevent mutilation of the projectile. Caution should be taken as some projectiles have sharp edges.

3. Projectile(s) embedded in wood, plaster, etc:
Unless absolutely necessary, do not attempt to dig out a projectile(s). If practical, remove a section of the material around the projectile(s) in which it's embedded and submit the entire piece to the laboratory.

B. PACKAGING

The projectile(s) should be packaged and sealed in a white slider box (pillbox) within a sealed envelope, and the container marked for identification. Plastic or glass airtight containers should never be used.

NOTE: Do not mark the bullets/projectiles.

IV. FIRED CARTRIDGE CASES (SHOTSHELLS), WADS AND UNFIRED CARTRIDGES

A. COLLECTION

A visual examination of each item should occur to preserve obvious latent print detail, blood, fluid, etc. Historical testing supports that significant latent print or DNA evidence is unlikely to be recovered on fired cartridge cases, therefore they will not routinely be processed to develop possible latent prints or swabbed for possible DNA.

B. PACKAGING

1. Fired cartridge cases (shotshells), wads and unfired cartridges should be packaged in envelopes, paper bags or boxes.
2. The container shall be marked for identification.
3. Fired cartridge cases or wads should be packaged in separate containers unless total amount is unmanageable and multiple are found in same area.
4. Unfired cartridges can be packaged in the same container if found in the same area.
5. Do not put fired cartridge cases in multiple envelopes inside of envelopes.

NOTE: All Federal guidelines shall be followed in the shipment of explosive substances through the mail.

NOTE: Do not mark the fired cartridge cases, shotshells, wads or unfired cartridges

V. GUNSHOT RESIDUE / RANGE DETERMINATIONS

The I-MCFSA does not analyze items of evidence for gunshot residue or conduct range determination.

VI. SERIAL NUMBER RESTORATIONS

All modern firearms manufactured post Gun Control Act of 1968 are required by federal law to be stamped with a unique serial number. Many firearms, particularly shotguns and rifles made prior to 1968 are not serialized so the absence of a serial number does not necessarily indicate an altered firearm. See section **II. FIREARMS D. PACKAGING** for packaging information. Do not place any covers or substances on the obliterated area.

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