

FIREARM & TOOLMARK SECTION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Evidence Handling / Case Process Protocol

A. PROCESSING EVIDENCE ANALYSIS REQUESTS

- 1) Evidence Analysis Requests (AKA Service Requests) are sent via PLIMS, unless an outside agency is involved. Outside agencies will continue to use the older printed Laboratory Request Form.
- 2) The Firearms Section supervisor or his designee will check the PLIMS service requests at least daily.
- 3) The service request will be handled via PLIMS as described in QM 4.4 and PM 4.1.
- 4) Denied requests will be documented in PLIMS.
 - a) Click "Deny"
 - b) Add a comment telling the officer why the request was denied and what can be done to fix the request, if applicable
- 5) If the evidence is to come directly to the Firearms Section, the examiner handling the service requests will request that the relevant items are added to the Property pull list via PLIMS. At that time a copy of the request will be printed and placed at the evidence acceptance area at the front of the section.
- 6) If the evidence is to go to another laboratory section first, the examiner handling the service request will not request delivery of the evidence. The evidence will be requested by the laboratory section that needs it first.

B. RECEIVING EVIDENCE

1. The following should be considered when receiving evidence:
 - a) Is the case a Firearms Section case?
 - b) Does it need to go to another section first?
 - c) Has the evidence been properly packaged to preserve the integrity of the evidence?
 - d) Are there holes in the packaging?
 - e) Is the packaging properly sealed?
 - f) Are the seals on the packaging properly initialed?
 - g) Has the lab previously rejected the evidence? Has the problem been corrected?
If there are problems with any of the above, consult PM 4.2 to reject the evidence.
 - h) The chain of custody will be tracked in PLIMS. (See PM 4.5)
 - i) Evidence will be logged in to the accepting Firearms Section person and then to the firearms vault, if necessary.
 - j) The employee accepting the evidence will place a copy of the service request, along with the evidence in the vault after logging it in via PLIMS.
2. Case priority should be assigned as listed below:
 - a. Assessment & Prioritization of case-
 - i. Highest Priority – Assigned by the Director or Major
 - ii. High Priority – Homicides, Non-Fatal Shootings, IA cases, cases going to court soon
 - iii. Medium Priority – Felony cases that may go to court someday
 - iv. Low Priority – Property crimes, firearm possession crimes, or other cases with little or no chance of going to court
 - b. Actions- When possible, all cases will be worked in the order received. At times when heavy case load, investigative timeliness, or political expediency dictates, cases may be worked on a priority basis as described below:

- i. High Priority Cases – Accept, work promptly
 - ii. Medium Priority Cases – Accept if there is space available, work as able
 - iii. Low Priority Cases – Accept (as space is available) cases within IBIS parameters (Listed in Firearms Examination Protocol) and work as able. For cases not within IBIS parameters, the case request should be rejected.
- c. When there is not enough room in the evidence vault to store all pending cases, evidence may be held in the Property Bureau until a later date. If this is the case, do not add it to the pull list until there is room in the vault.

C. STORING EVIDENCE

1. Place homicide cases in the homicide box
2. Place evidence in order of oldest complaint number first in appropriate slotted shelf in the vault
3. Store evidence envelopes in slotted shelves with a copy of the service request, if possible
4. When evidence won't fit in the slot, place the lab request sheet in the slot and the evidence as listed below
 - a) Store handgun boxes in the area below the slot with the request sheet
 - b) Store long guns in long gun shelf
 - c) Store armored gun boxes, bags and other large evidence in open shelves elsewhere in the vault

D. MARKING EVIDENCE

1. Policy- This policy applies to exhibits (Defined as either physical evidence or packaging containing physical evidence) and sub-exhibits. Evidence will be marked to meet the following criteria:
 - a) Markings must be sufficient to permit proper retrieval of evidence from storage. (This criterion should normally be met before the evidence reaches the Laboratory.)
 - b) Markings must be adequate for identification of evidence in court.
 - c) Markings must be designed to protect the integrity of the evidence (minimum ASCLD-LAB & CMPD standards).
 - d) All markings shall be accurate and legible.
2. Procedure-
 - a) To meet criterion A, the Complaint Number, Item #, and the initials of anyone who takes possession must be clearly visible on the evidence or package. The Complaint Number and Item # will not need to be repeated once someone has written them.
 - b) To meet criterion B, each analyst/examiner's initials or other unique mark must be on the evidence or the package/container.
 - c) To meet criterion C, the sealing tape must be initialed or otherwise identified. Markings on the tape must go across the tape and on to the package/container and include initials, date sealed and analyst's code number.
 - d) To meet criterion D, all markings must be accurate and clearly discernable on the evidence or package. The color of ink should be selected to provide suitable contrast to the background.
3. Types and location of Marks-
 - a) Marks must be able to withstand normal handling and moisture without obliteration.
 - b) During the marking process, care must be taken to place the markings in such a manner that they will not alter the evidential value or the essential nature of the evidence. Marks will be placed on the evidence so they are readily visible, unless the evidence is known or suspected to have intrinsic value. In this case, marks must be placed in an area that would lessen the alteration of the value of the object. Firearms may require special consideration.
 - c) If the evidence cannot be marked without destroying or altering any of its properties, it should be sealed in an appropriate container and the markings placed on the container.
 - d) If an ink pen is used to mark the item, the marks should be of sufficient size to be easily discernable. The color of the ink should be selected to provide suitable contrast to the background. Black permanent marker is preferred for marking sealed packages.
 - e) Firearms should be marked per the Firearms Examination Protocol.

- f) Firearms Section employees will mark the container at a minimum with the employee's initials and the date received. Examiners will also typically add the F-Number and item numbers.

E. RELEASING EVIDENCE

1. Case Finished
 - a. Close, seal and initial all packaging
 - b. Hold evidence for direct transfer to Property Clerk or send to Firearms Vault in PLIMS
 - c. All transactions must be tracked in PLIMS
 - d. If sending back unworked case due to Release, get copy of Release Form
 - e. If case is sent back unworked not due to Release, place a communication in the case file explaining the reason. All information must be scanned into PLIMS.
2. Case Released Temporarily to Officer or Other Section
 - a. Close and seal packaging, then initial seal
 - b. Complete transactions in PLIMS
3. Evidence to IBIS – See IBIS section of SOP

F. WORKING A CASE / PLIMS / WRITING A REPORT / REVIEWS – FOR FIREARMS EXAMINERS

Note: Some of the steps listed below can occur in a different order from what is listed

1. In PLIMS, take possession of the evidence for the case
2. Update the assignment in PLIMS
 - a. Edit assigned date
 - b. Edit assigned analyst, if necessary
 - c. Ensure that the status is to "Assigned to Analyst"
 - d. Edit Priority
 - i. "Normal" for most cases
 - ii. "Rush" for drop everything, do-it-now priorities
 - iii. "Priority" for normal priorities as assigned by the Lab Director
 - iv. "Expedite" for those that need to be put at the front of the line
 - e. Edit report type, if necessary
 - f. Check that the proper items are selected for analysis
3. Prepare file folder, read request, prepare worksheets, as needed
4. Complete analysis of items
5. Click "Analysis"
6. Edit Item descriptions as needed under the "Item" tab
7. Edit Item descriptions again under "Report Writing" tab as needed
8. Enter evidence information in matrix
 - a. Condense items as able
 - b. Be sure to list which items go to IBIS
 - c. Be sure to list comparison results
9. If another case number is involved, be sure to list the information in the appropriate matrix tab
10. Enter conclusions in matrix
11. Check "Analytical Notes"
12. Check report by clicking "Send to Word"
13. Edit report as necessary – be sure to recreate when changing items or conclusions in matrix
14. When finished, print a copy of the report
15. Attach non-printed photos, etc. to the assignment
16. Create sample items, seal and bar code label, if applicable.
17. In PLIMS, send sample items to "IBIS IN" or "FA Fired Standards", as necessary
18. Reseal evidence items – list items to IBIS on the envelope near your initials, when necessary
19. Return to Property or send to "IBIS IN", as necessary
20. Send case file for first review

G. FIRST REVIEW

1. Review report draft and notes for completeness and accuracy
2. Ensure that notes support conclusions as written in report
3. Ensure that proper verifications have been completed
4. When complete, place a 1 in a circle on the exterior of the case file
5. Return to examiner that worked the case

H. CASE COMPLETION

1. After receiving folder back from first review, make necessary corrections to report and/or notes
2. If report is changed, be sure to regenerate it and "Recreate" it in PLIMS
3. Discard report draft and printed lab request if it is duplicative of what is in PLIMS and if no changes have been made
4. Scan all hard copy notes, GRC lists, old paper lab requests, emails, etc.
5. Attach all scans to case assignment in PLIMS – scanned hardcopy emails can be discarded, but all other hard copy items will be stored in the hard copy case file
6. **Note: All hardcopy documents MUST be attached to the case in PLIMS unless it is an exact duplicate of something already in PLIMS.**
7. Once your review is complete and you feel the case is ready for publication, click "Ready for Rev." Note: unless the case is rejected in the second review, you will not be able to alter anything in the case from this point on
8. Click "Process"
9. Review notes, photos, chain of custody, scans, etc.
 - a. Fix problems as needed and repeat above steps, or
 - b. If no problems click "Accept" and sign report by typing in password in the box that opens
10. Route the case to the reviewer in PLIMS
 - a. Click "Routing"
 - b. Click "Route"
 - c. Enter the person to do the review in the top box
 - d. Enter the review code in the second box
 - e. Enter any note to the reviewer in the third box
 - f. Click "OK"
11. Give case folder to reviewer for final review
12. After the final review is complete, give the folder to the Lab secretary for labelling and filing

I. SECOND REVIEW

1. In the Notifications area of the Dashboard, click on "Assignments Routed To Me"
2. Click on the case that you wish to review
3. Click "Tech. Review"
4. Click on "Report" to review the lab report
 - a. Ensure that notes support conclusions
 - b. Ensure that needed changes from draft were made
 - c. Check spelling, grammar, numbers, etc.
 - d. Click the "X" in the top right corner to close when complete
5. Click on "Notes" to check the note package
 - a. Ensure that notes in matrix are complete
 - b. Ensure that notes in matrix agree with hardcopy notes
 - i. If issues are located, list them in the "Comments" box and click "Reject"
 - ii. Return folder to examiner
 - iii. If no issues are located, click "Yes" in the Response pick list and then "Review Complete"
 - iv. Click "Admin Review", click "Yes" in the Response pick list and then "Review Complete"
 - v. Place a check mark next to the circled "1" on the exterior of the case file
 - vi. Return folder to examiner

J. WORKING A CASE / PLIMS / WRITING A REPORT / REVIEWS – FOR IBIS TECHNICIAN

1. Take possession of the item in PLIMS (transfer to your personal barcode)
2. Go to the item in PLIMS
 - a. Either search or
 - b. Scan the item with the barcode scanner
3. Create a new assignment
 - a. Click on **“Assignments”**
 - b. Click **“Add”**
 - c. Choose/type **“NIBIN (IBIS)”**
 - d. Choose/type your name
 - e. Choose Priority **“Normal”**
 - f. Click **“Assigned to Analyst”**
 - g. Choose evidence
 - i. If it is a test fire, choose the firearm that fired the test
 - ii. If it is evidence, choose the actual item number that you are entering
 - h. Click **“Save”**.
4. Enter the item in IBIS/Brasstrax as you normally would
5. Seal the evidence back into its container
6. Click **“Analysis”**
7. Write Report
 - a. Click on **“Report Writing”**
 - b. Click the **+** sign next to **“Conclusions”**
 - c. Click **“Add Conclusion”**
 - d. Choose the appropriate conclusion and click on it
 - e. Click **“OK”**
 - f. Click on **“Send to Word”**
 - g. When the report opens in Word, check to make sure that you have the right item listed and that the appropriate conclusion was listed.
 - i. Firearm items should read: make, model, type, serial number (Glock model 23 pistol, serial number ABC123). If it doesn't look like that, fix it in the Items tab using the information in the attributes to the right of the description
 - ii. If it looks OK, proceed to step h.
 - h. If it's OK, close Word (red X in the top right corner), if not close and edit conclusion
 - i. Click **“Back to Assignment”**
 - j. Click **“Ready for Review”**
 - k. Click **“Process”** on the page that comes up
 - l. Click **“Yes”** on the *No documents* warning
 - m. Enter your password and click **“Yes”** on the Sign box
8. Route for Review
 - a. Click **“Routing”**
 - b. Click **“Route”**
 - c. Type/choose who you are sending it to
 - d. Type **AR** in the box
 - e. Click **“OK”**
9. Transfer evidence to appropriate location
 - a. For test fires in white slide boxes, transfer to **“FA Fired Standards”** in PLIMS and file
 - b. For tests from test fire tech or fired evidence, return to Property Tech per normal method

K. CASE RECORD REQUIREMENTS

Each case record is required to contain a minimum amount of documentation per PM 7.2. Following are the minimum case file content requirements. (* = must be in hardcopy folder)

Additionally, **in each case file where comparisons under multiple complaint numbers have been made, the documentation must make it easily understandable to a reviewer what comparisons were made and why** (i.e. the reason for the comparison and/or source of comparison request must be easily identifiable).

Note: All hardcopy documents MUST be attached (electronically) to the case in PLIMS unless it is an exact duplicate of something already in PLIMS (e.g. lab request).

Cases Where Analysis is Done

Worksheet(s)*

Pre-PLIMS Lab Request Forms* - if applicable

Lab report

GRC lists* - if applicable

Digital images

Case communications

Test shoeprints (or photos of soles for obvious eliminations)* - if applicable

Photocopies of evidence prints* - if applicable

No Analysis/ No Report Case

Pre-PLIMS Lab Request Forms* - if applicable

Note explaining why case not done or

Case disposition form or

Court order or

Case communications

(Black sticker on folder)

Issue Date	History
03/31/00	Original Issue
01/09/01	Added Gene Rivera to History Page
01/30/04	Revised cases held in PCB protocol, updated Gene's title, fixed typos
04/12/06	Added new section on processing analysis requests, revised evidence handling and case logging, created process map for request handling and revised process map for evidence handling
05/07/09	Updated lab request handling procedure
3/8/11	Added minimum case file requirements
6/17/11	Updated footer for ISO 17025
06/03/14	A complete rewrite for changes due to PLIMS (Not Highlighted)

Approval

Director _____ Date:
Matthew C. Mathis

Issuance

Chief Criminalist _____ Date:
Todd J. Nordhoff

Criminalist _____ Date:
Gene C. Rivera

Criminalist _____ Date:
Jennifer A. Pohlheber

IBIS Technician _____ Date:
Robert E. Moore