



Evidence Submission Guidelines

This document contains the current guidelines for the submission of evidence for analysis at the Onondaga County Center for Forensic Sciences – Laboratories (CFS). This document is meant to serve as a guide for submitting agencies and attorneys to determine which types of evidence should be submitted to the laboratory for analysis. It is expected that exceptions to these guidelines may need to be made on a case-by-case basis; however, any deviations from these approaches should be discussed with the laboratory prior to any submission requests being made.

Please contact the following staff at (315) 435-3800 or by email if you have questions regarding submission of evidence:

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Fire Debris

- All evidence related to suspected arson should be submitted to the laboratory as promptly as possible
- Submit comparison (control) samples whenever possible, to support the analysis.
- Submit container exemplars, (e.g., nylon fire evidence bags and metal cans) when possible, to support the analysis.
- Evidence containing suspected ignitable liquids – such as gas cans or charcoal/lighter fluid bottles – that require latent print or DNA analysis should have all liquid removed prior to submission.
- All liquid samples should be transferred into glass bottles with Teflon-lined screw caps, with no more than 1 ounce submitted, as this volume is sufficient for testing. Bottles should be securely packaged to prevent breakage and leakage.

Drugs

- Seized drug evidence that requires analysis for an investigation or prosecution – as determined by the submitting agency or attorney's office – should be submitted to the laboratory for analysis. Please indicate the specific purpose of the requested analysis in the comment field of the submission tab.
- Seized drug evidence for which a field color test is unavailable or produced inconclusive results may be submitted to the laboratory if analysis needed to support an arrest or charges, at the request of a submitting agency or attorney's office. Please indicate the specific purpose of the requested analysis in the comment field of the submission tab.
- Hypodermic syringes **will not** be accepted without prior approval from the Forensic Chemistry Supervisor or Director of Laboratories.
- **Do not submit field test kits.** The kits may leak and compromise the integrity of the evidence.
 - Additionally, **do not apply field test kit chemicals directly to items** that will be submitted to the laboratory, as the chemicals can degrade or destroy the evidence and interfere with laboratory analysis.
- Seized drug evidence packaging collected directly from a person will **not** be analyzed for latent prints or DNA unless special circumstances have been communicated in advance to the laboratory. Contact either the Latent Print or DNA Section Supervisor in such cases.
- Other seized drug evidence packaging will be considered for latent prints and/or DNA analysis **only if possession is in question.**





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- If practicable, the outermost packaging should be packaged separately from the drug evidence when submitted (but not the packaging material that is in direct contact with the substance).
- There will be a limit of ten items/samples per case for latent print analysis and two items/samples per case for DNA analysis. Please contact the Latent Print or DNA Section Supervisor if there are **extenuating circumstances** that may require analysis of additional items.

Digital Evidence

- Mobile devices (e.g. cellular phones, tablets, etc.) that are submitted to the CFS for digital evidence analysis should be isolated from the network when submitted to the CFS. Methods include: Turning on Airplane Mode and disabling Wi-Fi and Bluetooth or using radio frequency isolation packaging (i.e. Faraday bags).
- Proper Faraday bag packaging technique: The mobile device must be placed inside a Faraday bag and the collar folded twice on itself and secured with the included Velcro strap. The Faraday bag (containing the mobile device) will be placed in additional packaging.
- If the mobile device is recovered in the powered on state, the device should remain in the powered on state when submitted to the CFS for digital evidence analysis. Portable chargers and Faraday bags are available at the CFS Evidence Triage room if needed.
- If the mobile device is recovered in the powered off state, the device should remain in the powered off state when submitted to the CFS for digital evidence analysis.
- Mobile devices should be placed in separate packaging per evidence item (i.e. one cellular phone in one heat sealed evidence bag). The submitting agency should include any known passwords or personal identification numbers (PIN) as well as the proper legal authority to search the item with their digital evidence submission.
- All submissions for digital evidence examination should be accompanied by a proper search warrant (authorizing the seizure of and the forensic examination of the evidence by the **Onondaga County Center for Forensic Sciences – Laboratories**) or a consent-to-search form.

Firearms

- All firearms (with the exception of “safekeeping” weapons and suicide weapons) should be submitted for firearms analysis. This will include completion of a tracing form, operability/function testing to generate test fires, serial number restoration (if applicable) and open case file database searches with test fired cartridge cases (if applicable).





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- Safekeeping and pistol permit-related weapons may be submitted for **tracing form data only** unless prior approval is granted by the Firearms Section Supervisor or their designee to complete a test fire.
- Suicide weapons should not be submitted for firearms, latent print and/or DNA analysis unless deemed necessary by the submitting agency.
- All handguns (with associated cartridge magazines and cartridges) (except those voluntarily surrendered, submitted for safekeeping or associated with a suicide) and shortened or defaced long guns submitted to the laboratory will be automatically examined for latent prints (LP), but the agency/attorney is encouraged to still officially make an LP request. Long guns will only be examined for latent prints if there is an LP request made by the agency/attorney. Depending on case circumstances, the analysis and comparison of any recovered latent prints may be deferred. Agencies can request analysis and comparison at a later date if necessary. For firearms linked to other cases through NIBIN association, the laboratory will automatically analyze and compare any latent prints suitable for identification recovered from the firearms related evidence in that case
- It is understood that in some circumstances for officer safety that some evidence, particularly firearms, may have to be handled by an officer. If this occurs, please indicate the officer's name who handled the item in a submission comment so that any developed latent prints can be compared to the officer's known prints if necessary.
- All firearms (except those voluntarily surrendered, submitted for safekeeping or associated with a suicide) submitted to the laboratory will be swabbed for DNA analysis, and a report will be issued unless the examination is formally waived by the District Attorney's Office. Any additional DNA analysis will be detailed in a subsequent report.

Ammunition and Fired Ammunition Components

- Fired ammunition components such as cartridge cases, shot shells and bullets should be submitted for firearms analysis as soon as possible for analysis and/or entry into the laboratory open case databases (if applicable).
- Fired and unfired shot shells may be requested for Latent Print and/or DNA testing.
- Unfired ammunition (with the exception of shot shells) will not be analyzed for DNA testing but can be submitted for latent print testing.
- Due to the extremely low chance of recovering latent prints from fired cartridge components, latent print analysis will not be performed on fired cartridge cases (with the exception of shot shells) unless there is information to believe the items were handled after firing. If it is believed that a fired cartridge case was handled after firing, this information must be included in a





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comment upon submission or communicated to the Latent Print Section Supervisor as soon as possible thereafter.

- Due to the extremely low chance of recovering DNA from fired cartridge components, DNA analysis will not be performed on fired cartridge cases (with the exception of shot shells) from non-death cases unless bodily fluids are present. Fired cartridge cases from death investigations will be swabbed for potential DNA analysis automatically, but the agency/attorney is encouraged to still officially make a Forensic Biology (FB) request. A request to perform DNA analysis on swabbings collected from fired cartridge cases must be made directly with the Forensic Biology/DNA Section Supervisor.

Gunshot Residue/Distance Determination

- Requests for gunshot residue analysis on victim's clothing **must** be approved by the Firearms Section Supervisor or their designee prior to the submission of the clothing.
- Suspect's clothing is not routinely analyzed and will not be accepted for gunshot residue analysis without the approval of the Firearms Section Supervisor or their designee.

Non-violent Crimes

- Latent Print Analysis:
 - For any residential burglary or recovered stolen vehicle cases, the laboratory requests that the agency (other than the Syracuse Police Department) submit elimination prints or provide information to the laboratory for access to an electronic equivalent (i.e. name, and date of birth, NYSID #, or FBI # for live-scan or RIC) prior to the commencement of laboratory analysis.
 - If photographs of latent prints were taken at the crime scene, copies of these should be placed on a CD or DVD, entered as an item in the BEAST, and submitted to the laboratory for analysis. The photos should be submitted in conjunction with any latent print lifts as the photos are often of higher quality than the latent print lift itself. It is extremely important that the photograph contain a scale with a desired resolution of minimally 1000 ppi.
- DNA Analysis:
 - Items belonging to the suspect and left at the scene by the perpetrator such as blood; saliva from bottles, cans, cigarette butts and chewing gum; tools such as screwdrivers and flashlights; and clothing items such as hats, shirts, glasses and gloves should be





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- submitted. For cases with arrested suspects, the laboratory may contact the submitting agency and attorney to determine if analysis is necessary and may request the submission of the known DNA standards of the victim(s) prior to starting DNA analysis.
- DNA analysis of trace evidence: Trace evidence is defined as evidence that has no visible staining and would contain DNA that only results from touching an item with the skin. Trace evidence will only be analyzed if profiles are not generated from other probative evidence. If probative information is obtained from one item, testing of additional items may be deferred.
 - For non-violent crimes, a maximum of two items will be analyzed per case unless exceptional circumstances have been discussed with the laboratory. Trace evidence swabs collected from counters, walls, light switches, doors, etc. from public locations or from swabs of items that were generally handled by the victim and believed to only have been touched briefly by a suspect such as padlocks, tools, jewelry boxes, doorknobs, light switches, electrical cords, etc. will not be analyzed. Only swabs from steering wheels from cars will be analyzed for trace DNA unless exceptional circumstances have been discussed with the Forensic Biology/DNA Section Supervisor.
 - **Requests for items identified as not subject to trace DNA analysis will be canceled by the laboratory. If you believe analysis is warranted, please contact the section supervisor for further consideration.**

Assaults/Crimes Against Persons

- Items that may yield a probative result for cases without an arrest should be submitted to the laboratory for analysis if needed for an investigation at the request of a submitting agency. Evidence from cases with an arrest should be submitted for analysis at the request of the attorney's office unless special circumstances are communicated to the laboratory (e.g. a known second suspect is unidentified).
- Latent Print Analysis:
 - The laboratory may request elimination prints prior to latent print comparisons, including SABIS or FBI NGI database searches, on a case-by-case basis.
 - If photographs of latent prints were taken at the crime scene, copies of these should be placed on a CD or DVD, entered as an item in the BEAST, and submitted to the laboratory for analysis. The photos should be submitted in conjunction with any latent print lifts as the photos are often of higher quality than the latent print lift itself. It is extremely important that the photograph contain a scale with a desired resolution of minimally 1000 ppi.





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- DNA Analysis:

- Possible weapons, suspect's clothing (if the victim may have bled or for wearer DNA if clothing was left at the scene by the perpetrator), victim's clothing (if the perpetrator may have bled) or other items that may link the perpetrator to the crime scene should be submitted for analysis. Known DNA standards from the victim may be requested prior to the commencement of DNA analysis.
- Trace evidence is defined as evidence that has no visible staining and would contain DNA that only results from touching an item with the skin. Trace evidence will only be analyzed if profiles are not generated from other probative evidence. If probative information is obtained from one item, testing of additional items may be deferred. Only swabs from steering wheels from cars will be analyzed for trace DNA unless exceptional circumstances have been discussed with the Forensic Biology/DNA Section Supervisor.

Sexual Assaults

- DNA Analysis of Sexual Assaults:

- Initially a sexual assault kit and/or used condoms should be submitted. Victim's clothing may be submitted at a later date if the sexual assault kit is negative for probative evidence. Bedding and other items should only be submitted if other evidence does not yield probative information and after approval from the laboratory.

Homicides

- In major cases it is valuable to have a meeting with CFS staff, detectives, attorneys and crime scene personnel to prioritize evidence and to discuss the case in its entirety to ensure the best and most efficient analysis occurs. It is highly recommended that prior to homicide evidence being submitted for analysis (with the exception of firearms evidence) a meeting be held between the submitting agency, attorney's office (if applicable), and the CFS staff from all the relevant sections. It is recommended that firearms evidence from homicides be submitted as soon as possible and does not require a meeting.
- In homicide cases involving large amounts of evidence, evidence may be analyzed in a sequential manner, with the items deemed most likely to provide the most probative evidence tested first. If probative information is obtained from analysis of an item, testing of additional items may be deferred.
- Latent Print Analysis:
 - The laboratory may request elimination prints prior to latent print comparisons, including SABIS or FBI NGI) database searches, on a case-by-case basis.





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- If photographs of latent prints were taken at the crime scene, copies of these should be placed on a CD or DVD, entered as an item in the BEAST, and submitted to the laboratory for analysis. The photos should be submitted in conjunction with any latent print lifts as the photos are often of higher quality than the latent print lift itself. It is extremely important that the photograph contain a scale with a desired resolution of minimally 1000 ppi.
- DNA Analysis:
 - DNA analysis of trace evidence: Trace evidence is defined as evidence that has no visible staining and would contain DNA that only results from touching an item with the skin. Trace evidence will only be analyzed if profiles are not generated from other probative evidence. If probative information is obtained from one item, testing of additional items may be deferred.

