

KERN REGIONAL CRIME LABORATORY
Laboratory Services Section, Evidence Control Unit



Policy on the Submission of Evidence for Firearms Analysis

QT41348

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The purpose of this document is to provide law enforcement and criminal justice officials with guidance regarding the submission of physical evidence for examination/analysis by the Kern Regional Crime Laboratory Firearms and Toolmarks Unit (FTU).

Services offered in Portal under the Firearms & Toolmarks Unit (FTU) Discipline

Discipline	Service Type
Firearms & Toolmarks Unit	Firearm Analysis v2.0
	Firearm Database Search
	Toolmark Analysis v2.0
	Serial Number Restoration v2.0
	Fracture Match Analysis

Evidence items analyzed under each Service (narrative follows)

Service Type	Evidence item	Can be tested for:
Firearm Analysis v2.0	Firearm	Condition
		Class & individual characteristics
		Functionality
		Trigger pull pressure
		Full-automatic firing mode
	Bullets	Class & individual characteristics
		List of possible firearms
		Compared to test-fired bullets from submitted firearm(s) or other evidence bullets
	Fired cartridge cases or	Class & individual

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	shot shells	characteristics
		Compared to test-fired cartridge cases from submitted firearm(s) or other evidence cartridge cases
	Shot pellets, buckshot or slugs	Size
		Gauge
		Possible manufacturer
	Wadding	Gauge
		Possible manufacturer
		Suitable markings for comparison
	Unfired cartridges or shot shells that may have been cycled through a firearm	Manufacturer
		Caliber or gauge
		Suitable markings for comparison
Firearm Database Search	Firearm	Entry of test-fired cartridge cases/shot shells to search the database to identify possible association to evidence cartridge cases/shot shells from other shooting incidents
	Fired cartridge cases or shot shells	Entry of evidence cartridge cases/shot shells to search the database to identify possible association to evidence cartridge cases/shot shells from other shooting incidents
	Bullets	Entry of evidence bullets to search the database to identify possible association to bullets from other shooting incidents (requires pre-

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		approval)
Serial Number Restoration v2.0	Firearm	Restoration of obliterated or altered serial numbers
Toolmark Analysis v2.0	Items containing evidence toolmarks or cast of toolmarks, recovered tools	Type of tool that produced the toolmark
		Class & individual characteristics
		Evidence toolmarks/cast of toolmarks compared to test marks made by recovered/submitted tool(s)
Fracture Match Analysis	Broken, cut or torn pieces such as broken car pieces, plastic, glass, wood, metal, tape, plastic bags, fabric, etc.; Recovered items for comparison	Class & individual characteristics
		Broken, torn or cut unknown pieces compared to recovered items for a physical fit/match

Analysis recommendations:

1. For all submitted firearms and/or fired cartridge cases, select a Firearm Database Search request;
2. For a confirmation of a Firearm Database Search image association, select a Firearm Analysis v2.0 request (pre-approval is not needed); and/or
3. For one or more fired bullets, select a Firearm Analysis v2.0 request.
 - a. Note: Firearm Database Search requests for a bullet require pre-approval from Supervising Criminalist Alison Kennedy, due to the small size of the current bullet database and therefore limited value to any results thereof.

Restrictions

Firearm comparison from one case to another case requires a written letter of permission from Supervising Criminalist Alison Kennedy. If the case-to-case

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comparison is the result of a Firearm Database Search image association, then pre-approval is not needed.

The laboratory reserves the right to compare items of evidence that appear to be related, including between agencies. When an interagency comparison has been completed, the report of examination will be released to both or all agencies involved in the comparison.

The laboratory will not pick up evidence items to be analyzed. Agencies are responsible for transporting items to and from the laboratory for analysis.

The laboratory will not supply gun boxes.

In order to be searched in the laboratory's Firearms Database, a firearm must be suspected of being used in a crime. Consequently, the Firearms and Toolmarks Unit will not accept guns recovered as a result of:

1. Found property (PC 485);
2. Mental Instability (WI 5150)(PC 1367);
3. Safekeeping (PC 2080);
4. Surrender (PC 527.9);
5. Domestic violence (PC 243);
6. Malicious mischief (PC 594); or
7. Miscellaneous investigations.

Evidentiary toolmark photographs cannot be utilized for comparison unless they are accompanied with the actual item with the toolmark or a casting of the toolmark.

SUBMISSION OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE TO THE LABORATORY FOR ANALYSIS

Agency Responsibilities

In general, minimally handle all items to avoid loss, damage or destruction of evidence.

When submitting a firearm to the Kern Regional Crime Laboratory for examination:

1. Unload the firearm and render it safe;
2. Remove ammunition components and magazine (if it has one) from the firearm;

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3. Secure the firearm (with action open, if possible) with plastic ties in
a properly sealed evidence gun box.
 - Ammunition components and magazine can be placed together inside of the gun box with the firearm, if packaged or secured separately (unless prohibited by your agency policy); and
4. If the magazine of the gun is available, **it must be submitted** at the same time as the firearm so that test firing can be completed.

Gun boxes will be opened at the Evidence Control Unit counter in the presence of the agency representative in order to verify that the weapon has been rendered safe. Gloves, masks and evidence tape will be provided. Once verified to be safe, the agency representative will re-seal the gun box with evidence tape. This step is necessary to ensure that all firearms entering the laboratory are safe and to ultimately protect all personnel who handle them.

When submitting firearms-related evidence items such as cartridge cases, shot shells, or bullets to the Kern Regional Crime Laboratory for examination:

1. Package the item in a properly sealed evidence container with the outermost package preferably larger than 1 inch by 4 inches (large enough to affix a barcode label.)

When submitting clothing or other items for gunpowder pattern determination and possible muzzle-to-target distance determination:

1. Package each item in a separate, properly sealed evidence container; and
2. A suspect firearm and all case live ammunition and any spent ammunition components must be submitted to perform a muzzle-to-target distance determination.

When submitting toolmark related evidence items such as items containing evidence toolmarks, casts of evidence toolmarks and recovered tools:

1. Package each item in a separate, properly sealed evidence container; and
2. Secure the tool in such a way as to prevent movement and protect the portion of the tool used to make marks.

When submitting fracture match related evidence items:

1. Package each item in a separate, properly sealed evidence container; and
2. Package securely in such a way as to prevent any further breakage of items.

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SUBMISSION OF PHYSICAL EVIDENCE TO THE LABORATORY VIA PORTAL

Full instructions for the use of Portal is available on the laboratory's website, www.co.kern.ca.us/daCrimeLab. Click on the link "Getting started with Portal" and there you will find basic instructions for use with a link to in-depth instructions by clicking on "Instructions for using Portal."

Submitting Evidence in Portal

Use the following example when submitting item(s) for firearms analysis.

Evidence Type	Evidence Description
Box (gun box)	Sealed gun box labeled as – [Agency property # or item #], [Exact description as on label or evidence box]
Envelope (other envelope)	Sealed envelope labeled as - [Agency property # or item #], [Exact description as on label or evidence envelope]
Bag	[Agency property # or item #], [Exact description as on label or evidence bag]
Box (other box)	Sealed box labeled as - [Agency property # or item #], [Exact description as on label or evidence box]

Add/Edit Evidence	Add/Edit Evidence
Evidence Type Box (gun box) ▼	Evidence Type Envelope (other envelope) ▼
Description Sealed gun box labeled as - 112233-4, <u>Ruger</u> LC9, serial number N11223	Description Sealed envelope labeled as - 112233-5, Spent casing, .22 <u>cal</u> Winchester
Note	Note
Submitting Rep Tammi Noe ▼	Submitting Rep Tammi Noe ▼
✓ Save ✓ Save & Add Another Cancel	✓ Save ✓ Save & Add Another Cancel

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Submitting Request(s) in Portal

See page 1 for the *Discipline(s)* and *Service Type(s)* available for submitting physical evidence for firearms analysis request(s) in Portal.

Add Request

Discipline

Firearms and Toolmarks Unit

Complexity

Case Work

Notes

Select...

Firearm Analysis

Firearm Analysis v2.0

Firearm Database Search

Fracture Match Analysis

Gunshot Distance Determination v2.0

Serial Number Restoration v2.0

Shoe Impression

Tire Impression

Toolmark Analysis v2.0

Requesting Rep

Tammi Noe

Due Date

✓ Save

✓ Save & Add Another

Cancel

Please print the Evidence List and submit along with your evidence to the Evidence Control Unit of the Laboratory.

Evidence submitted without a printout may not be accepted.

Laboratory Responsibilities

In order to accept physical evidence from law enforcement officials a member of the Kern Regional Crime Laboratory's Evidence Control Unit (ECU) shall:

1. Ensure that the information on the evidence is properly completed. The following information, at a minimum, is **required** for acceptance:
 - a. Agency;
 - b. Incident date;
 - c. Requesting officer;
 - d. Agency case number;
 - e. Offense(s);
 - f. Subject and/or victim names (first and last); and
 - g. Requested analysis.
2. Ensure that the outer packaging of the evidence is properly sealed; and

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3. Record the date, time, and received from and by in the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS).

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