



Evidence Submission Guidelines

Effective: 10/13/2023

Applies to: Law Enforcement and Legal Agencies

EVIDENCE SUBMISSION GUIDELINES



IOWA DCI CRIMINALISTICS LABORATORY

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Laboratory Administrator	3
SECTION I: General Submissions	4
SECTION II: DNA Evidence Submissions	5
SECTION III: Document Evidence Submissions	8
SECTION IV: Drug Evidence Submissions	9
SECTION V: Fire/Explosive Evidence Submissions	11
SECTION VI: Firearms and Toolmarks Evidence Submissions	12
SECTION VII: Latent Print Evidence Submissions	14
SECTION VIII: Toxicology Submissions	16
SECTION IX: Trace Evidence Submissions	17

Kim Reynolds
Governor
Adam Gregg
Lt. Governor



Department of Public Safety
Stephan K. Bayens
Commissioner

October 13, 2023

Dear Laboratory Stakeholders:

In September of 2011 the DCI Laboratory first implemented formal evidence submission and processing guidelines in an effort to address increasing backlogs and turnaround times at the lab. The last update of these guidelines was issued in September of 2019. As evidence submitted to the laboratory changes in type, complexity and volume we've determined an update to our submission guidelines is appropriate. This correspondence includes those updated guidelines.

As we've stated in the past, the intent of these submission guidelines is to focus laboratory resources on performing analyses and examinations on the most probative items of evidence in each case, and to reduce or eliminate processing on evidence with lesser or no probative value. In some instances we will not accept evidence unless special circumstances exist and prior approval is provided by the appropriate section supervisor. The guidelines are meant to address unnecessary processing of evidence, not eliminate the analysis of evidence that really is needed. We are always going to allow the opportunity, based on the case, to submit additional evidence if needed. By prioritizing the most probative items we hope to maintain and potentially improve turnaround times on submissions for all stakeholders.

This information has been provided by email to agency heads at all of our stakeholder agencies, and submitting agency personnel responsible for pre-logging of evidence. The information will also be posted on the DCI Laboratory website (<https://dps.iowa.gov/divisions/criminal-investigation/criminalistics-laboratory/main-page>) and the evidence pre-log site in the BEAST. Please pass this information on to other personnel within your agency or organization who are involved with submission of evidence, or who may be otherwise impacted.

If you have questions regarding the submission guidelines, please do not hesitate to call our main lab number at (515) 725-1500. Laboratory personnel will be available to answer your questions. You can also contact Lab Administrator Paul Hermsen by email at hermsen@dps.state.ia.us.

Thank you for your assistance in helping to adopt these revised guidelines aimed at utilizing DCI Laboratory resources as efficiently as possible. It is our sincere hope that we can continue to provide the timely forensic science services you need and expect from us.

Respectfully,

PAUL E. HERMSEN, Laboratory Administrator
Iowa Division of Criminal Investigation

Encl: Evidence Submission and Processing Guidelines

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Integrity, Fairness, Respect, Honesty, Courage, Compassion, Service

SECTION I: GENERAL SUBMISSIONS

1. Only evidence that will be used for prosecution should be submitted for analysis.
2. When multiple sections of the laboratory are involved, consultation with the submitter and the other affected sections of the laboratory should take place prior to processing. Processing by one section of the laboratory may have a detrimental effect on another section's ability to successfully process this item of evidence.
3. Evidence submissions relative to computer crimes and cell phones should be made through the DCI Cyber Crimes Unit at one of their locations (Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, and Council Bluffs) and not at the DCI Crime Laboratory. More information regarding the Cyber Crime Unit offices is available on their website at <https://dps.iowa.gov/divisions/criminal-investigation/field-operations/cyber-crime>.
4. Submitting agencies or prosecuting attorney's offices should notify the DCI Crime Laboratory if and when they become aware that a case has been disposed and no longer needs to be worked by our laboratory.
5. Syringes pose a great safety hazard; they are not acceptable for submission and will be returned without analysis performed. Syringe washings for drug analysis and swabs from syringes for DNA may be acceptable as long as they meet the submission requirements of the respective section(s) below. Please contact the laboratory for additional information or guidance on collection of syringe washings.
6. Counterfeit currency will not be accepted by the DCI Laboratory.

SECTION II: DNA EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. Where the issue is consent and not identity, please consider not submitting DNA evidence for processing unless needed.
2. DNA testing will be complete when an association is established from probative evidence. (For example, an association is established between the subject and the victim.)
3. Please provide a scenario for the submitted evidence by completing and submitting a [DNA Case Information Form](#). This scenario will establish the value of each item as to its likelihood to provide probative results or an investigative lead, and also helps to determine CODIS eligibility. There are strict Federal guidelines that the laboratory must follow regarding CODIS eligibility. This form assists with that CODIS eligibility determination and can be obtained on the BEAST pre-log website or by contacting the laboratory Evidence Room.
4. The number of evidence items accepted by the laboratory will be limited depending on the nature and type of cases submitted. Additional items may be accepted at the time of the initial submission after consultation with the investigator, the DNA analyst, and the DNA Section Supervisor. Consultation may be in person or via conference call. Including the prosecutor in item submission decisions is advised.

5. TIERED SUBMISSIONS**A. TIER ONE SUBMISSIONS (without consultation)**

1. Homicides
 - a. Up to ten (10) probative items
 - b. Appropriate DNA reference standards
2. Sexual Crimes
 - a. Sexual Assault Kit: one (1) additional probative item and appropriate DNA standards
 - b. No Sexual Assault Kit: up to three (3) probative items and appropriate DNA standards
3. All Other Crimes Against Persons
 - a. Up to three (3) probative items
 - b. Appropriate DNA reference standards
4. Property Crimes
 - a. Up to two (2) probative items
 - b. Appropriate DNA reference standards
5. NOTE: No multi-item submissions will be allowed for circumventing this policy.

B. TIER TWO SUBMISSIONS (consultation required)

1. Homicides – Up to ten (10) additional probative items
2. Sexual Crimes – Up to three (3) additional probative items
3. All Other Crimes Against Persons – Up to three (3) additional probative items

4. Property Crimes – Up to two (2) additional probative items
5. **NOTE:** No multi-item submissions will be allowed for circumventing this policy.
- C. Additional appropriate DNA reference standards (knowns) may be submitted at any time.
 1. Submission of an elimination standard is strongly encouraged for a consensual partner who had sexual contact with the victim within 72-hours of evidence collection. Please use the DNA Case Information Form to provide information related to knowledge of a consensual partner.
- D. If probative information is obtained from the TIER ONE submissions, no further submissions will be accepted without approval of the DNA Section Supervisor and/or Casework DNA Technical Leader. After completing initial testing, if additional analysis is indicated, the case analyst will consult with the DNA Section Supervisor and/or Casework DNA Technical Leader to evaluate the case status. The investigator will be contacted thereafter to discuss a possible TIER TWO submission.
- E. If no probative information is obtained from the TIER ONE and TIER TWO submissions, a conference including the investigator, prosecutor, case analysts, DNA Section Supervisor, and/or Casework Technical Leader will be necessary before any further submissions are allowed.
- F. Every effort will be made to assign newly submitted evidence to the TIER ONE case analyst immediately upon submission.

6. TOUCH EVIDENCE

1. Touch DNA analysis uses the assumption that someone who handles or touches an item will deposit their DNA onto the item allowing for the development of a DNA profile from the responsible person. While promising in theory, the limited amounts of DNA on touch DNA samples does not often yield a useful/interpretable DNA profile. It is important to consider the type of evidence being sampled for touch DNA and the likelihood of someone other than the perpetrator coming in contact with the evidence. The results of such testing can often yield either a mixture of DNA from several people that is not interpretable or a profile of an individual unrelated to the crime.
 - a. Historically, our laboratory has had a very low success rate with developing interpretable DNA profiles from touch evidence.
 - b. Touch evidence does not include items submitted for wearer DNA (such as shirts, shoes, hats, etc.) or items believed to contain saliva (such as cigarette butts and bottles/cans).
2. Touch evidence will be accepted for possible STR DNA analysis when there is a high degree of likelihood that the evidence submitted will provide probative results or investigative leads. A high degree of likelihood may be established by means of witness corroboration, visual monitoring systems, or sound deductive reasoning.
3. Touch evidence may be processed on violent crimes and non-violent crimes cases when appropriate. Before submission, consultation about the likelihood of successful DNA testing on this type of

Evidence Submission Guidelines

evidence between the Investigator and the DNA Section Supervisor and/or the DNA Casework Technical Leader is beneficial and appreciated.

4. Touch evidence may be processed in cases for which no other probative evidence exists.
5. When other sections of the laboratory are involved, consultation between the submitter and the affected sections of the laboratory should take place prior to any processing. Processing an item by the DNA Section may have a detrimental effect on the ability of another section of the laboratory to process this item of evidence. Therefore, DNA processing may not always be the best choice.
6. Items submitted for touch evidence processing should comply with existing policy relating to the number of items of evidence that may be submitted based on case type.
7. Elimination standards (knowns) should be submitted with touch evidence where appropriate (e.g. owner of stolen vehicle).
8. Possession drug cases and felon in possession of firearms cases may be processed for touch DNA. Before submission, consultation about the likelihood of successful DNA testing on this type of evidence between the Investigator and the DNA Section Supervisor and/or the DNA Casework Technical Leader is beneficial and appreciated. Please consider only submitting evidence for touch DNA testing on these types of cases when it is essential for the investigation.

7. DNA REFERENCE STANDARDS (KNOWN STANDARDS)

- A. Please submit DNA reference standards whenever possible.
- B. A DNA reference standard is a “known sample” collected from a specific individual, typically the victim or the suspect. Names and other information provided need to be accurate and precise (i.e. spelling, date of birth, etc.)
- C. DNA reference standards are preferred to be buccal swabs (swabs of the inside of the cheek in the individual’s mouth). However, a liquid blood sample collected in a purple top blood tube is also acceptable.
- D. An elimination standard is a DNA reference standard from an individual who is not related to the crime but has access to the crime scene (i.e. a consensual sexual partner, car/home owners, etc.). Elimination standards are typically used to assist in determining CODIS eligibility of a DNA profile developed from crime scene evidence.
- E. Convicted offender DNA samples that are court ordered to be submitted to the laboratory for CODIS Offender Database entry are not DNA reference standards. Convicted offender DNA samples do not have a chain of custody and therefore cannot be used in casework comparison. Separate reference standards from suspects and/or victims must be submitted, as evidence with the proper chain of custody, for direct comparison to the DNA profile developed from the crime scene evidence.

SECTION III: DOCUMENT EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. False Use of Financial Instrument (check) cases involving totals less than \$1,000 will not be accepted without prior approval from the Section Supervisor.
2. False Use of Financial Instrument (check) cases involving only banking industry digital images of checks as the only items in question will not be accepted.
3. Check cases with totals over \$1,000 involving a combination of digital images and original checks will be accepted. For further information about digital check images, contact the Section Supervisor.
4. Counterfeit currency is not accepted. Contact your nearest U.S. Secret Service field office for more information.

SECTION IV: DRUG EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. The DCI Crime Laboratory does not analyze commercially labeled marijuana and CBD products that come from states where it has been legalized unless a specific request is made in advance. Officers should use the label to determine the amount and types of cannabinoids present in the product, as those states require accurate packaging and testing of those products to be sold in their states. This includes CBD products sold in Iowa and registered under the Department of Health and Human Services.
2. Semi-quantitative testing can be performed on loose plant material weighing **one (1) gram** or more. Burned plant material, growing plants, hand rolled cigarettes, edibles/consumables, and vape cartridges will not be instrumentally tested for THC levels.
 - a. On *possession* cases, only one (1) item per suspect will be analyzed to confirm the substance is marijuana.
 - b. On *possession with intent to deliver* cases, only one (1) item per exhibit per suspect will be analyzed to confirm marijuana.
 - c. For *delivery* cases, the crime lab will contact the submitting agency to discuss items needing testing.
 - d. If additional items need tested outside the parameters mentioned above, please make that request in the pre-log submission or contact the Drug Section Supervisor.
3. Vape cartridges must be separated from the electronic bodies before submission. Cartridges should be placed in a leak-proof container; the electronic body is to be retained at your agency. If cartridges cannot be separated, the battery must be removed from the body and the pen rendered inoperable.
4. Plant material should be dried prior to submission, or should be submitted in paper packaging to eliminate the possibility of the evidence molding while in storage.
5. If there are multiple defendants in one case, it should be noted on the receipt form as to which item(s) belongs to which defendant.
6. Drug paraphernalia, cigarette butts, and residues(s) will not be tested unless it is the only item in the case or the submission is approved by the Drug Chemistry Section Supervisor or designee.
7. Items with residue(s) will not be tested if weighable quantities are also submitted.
8. Analysis will not be done on labeled syringes containing mushroom spores. Syringes are not accepted by the Laboratory.
9. Syringes suspected of containing other drugs must be dispensed or rinsed into a leak proof container. The container with the rinsing can then be submitted for analysis.

Evidence Submission Guidelines

10. Purity determination will only be performed on federal methamphetamine cases of one (1) gram or more, or if approved by the Drug Chemistry Section Supervisor or designee. The federal prosecutor's name and contact information MUST be provided during evidence prelog.
11. Explicitly state if the evidence was removed from a body cavity and mark with biohazard sticker/bags.
12. Controlled substances must be separated from packaging prior to submission when cases also require latent print processing. The exception would be tightly wrapped bricks or bundles. The outside of the packages will be processed prior to analysis of the contained drug material.
13. Drug diversion type cases, factory-sealed, tamper-proof, or sealed blister pack pharmaceuticals will not be routinely accepted. As long as the packaging is not compromised, the agency can easily look up the information provided.

SECTION V: FIRE/EXPLOSIVES EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. DO NOT use paper or plastic (polyethylene, sandwich, or garbage) bags.
2. Glass is an acceptable container for ignitable liquids.
 - A. Teflon coated/lined lids preferred
 - B. Mason jars can be used with the rubber seal on the lid facing outward
 - C. A secondary airtight container (can/nylon bag) is recommended in case the glass breaks.
 - D. Only a small portion of sample is needed. The submission of the entire gas can, bottle of charcoal lighter fluid, etc. is not necessary. With large liquid samples, it is recommended to submit 1/3 of the liquid and retain the other 2/3 should additional testing be requested by defense council in the future.
3. Clean, unused paint cans (lined or unlined) are the most robust containers for debris
 - A. Fill no more than 66% (2/3) of the can to leave open air space for analysis.
 - B. Keep 'v' groove free of debris or lid will not close and it will compromise the evidence.
 - C. Do not buy/use gold-lined cans.
4. Nylon or AMPAC/Kapack bags are recommended for large clothing items that do not fit with proper air space in the can.
 - A. Not recommended for sharp objects that might puncture the bag and compromise the evidence.
 - B. Must be sealed air tight and still have available open air space for analysis.
 - C. 20" x 30" bags are good for gas cans.
 - D. Sources include Grand River Products (313-881-7861) and multiple other vendors.
5. Sampling - Take multiple samples from the edge of pattern areas/lower areas.
 - A. For liquid pour patterns, collect from one edge through the center to the other edge (the width of the pattern).
6. Comparison samples of substrates, especially carpet, flooring and wood, are highly encouraged.
 - A. Although not recommended for ignitable liquid evidence, should swabs/gauze be used to collect samples, a comparison sample must also be submitted.
7. Soil samples being submitted for ignitable liquids or explosives should be submitted in an air tight container and kept frozen.

SECTION VI: FIREARMS AND TOOLMARKS EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. Submissions for property crime cases involving tool mark requests will be evaluated based on circumstances of the case and will include consideration of damage/loss amounts. Please consider laboratory resources prior to submission and contact the Firearms Section Supervisor or designee with questions.
2. No BB, pellet, or Airsoft guns will be accepted for analysis. Manufacturers' statements containing specifications and warnings associated with each model can be found on the manufacturers' websites, on literature sold with the items, or sometimes imprinted on the item itself.
3. Prior to beginning work on "older" cases, calls may be made to the submitting agencies or prosecuting attorney's offices in an effort to learn if the cases are still active or have been disposed of.
4. **GUNSHOT RESIDUE ANALYSIS**
 - A. Suspect's clothing and hand swabs will not be accepted for gunshot residue analysis. Please contact the laboratory for information regarding suggested testing facilities.
 - B. Gunshot residue analysis is limited to a microscopic examination of the impact area. Due to variables beyond the analyst's control, and the effect that those variables have on laboratory accreditation, it has been decided that distance determinations will no longer be made. Please refer to the Medical Examiner's report for an estimation of the muzzle-to-target distances.
5. **NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTIC INFORMATION NETWORK (NIBIN)**
 - A. NIBIN is a computer database used to determine whether the same firearm has been discharged in multiple shooting incidents. This is an investigative tool only and is not to be considered a viable substitute for microscopic confirmations performed by a trained firearm examiner when the case is scheduled for court. Semiautomatic pistols and rifles are known to leave cartridge cases at scenes and, as such, are the only cartridge cases accepted for entry into the NIBIN database. High Probability 'hits,' whether performed at the DCI Crime Laboratory or through the BATF&E Correlation Center, are investigative leads intended to assist the submitting agency as part of an investigation.
 - B. For a listing of which firearms are acceptable for test fires and entry into NIBIN, please see the list on the BEAST Web Prelog site or contact the Firearms Section.
 - C. When submitting firearms, the laboratory will enter fired cartridge cases from semiautomatic pistols and semiautomatic rifles. Entries from semiautomatic rifles are limited to the following calibers:
 1. 22 Long or Long Rifle
 2. 223 Remington / 5.56mm NATO (5.56x45mm)
 3. 7.62x39mm (7.62 Russian)
 4. 308 Winchester / 7.62 NATO (7.62x51mm)

- D. No cartridge cases or fired shotshells from single, pump, lever, revolving, or bolt action firearms will be entered into the NIBIN system.
- E. Confirmations of high probability NIBIN 'hits' will be performed only on death cases and cases with a known trial date. Microscopic examinations and confirmations are lengthy procedures that normally involve multiple examiners reviewing the case items for proper identification and reporting.

6. DELIVERY OF GUNS FOR DESTRUCTION

- A. The DCI Crime Laboratory accepts firearms, ammunition, and edged weapons for destruction. While firearms and edge weapons do not need to be packaged in some manner, we ask that any item that may have blood and/or tissue on it be packaged and the outer package marked appropriately. This is for the safety of your personnel transporting the items as well as that of the laboratory personnel who take charge of them once they are at the lab.
- B. When preparing to transport seized and forfeited firearms to the lab as part of the "Guns for Destruction" process (IAC 661-95), it is necessary to call the laboratory first and make arrangements with the Firearms Section. This request assists the laboratory so that the turned in weapons can be stored swiftly as there are times when the laboratory has reached its capacity on processing and storing guns for destruction. At those times, the laboratory will necessarily have to suspend the receipt of additional guns until processing and destruction frees up the necessary storage space.
- C. On occasion, a firearm may be in the laboratory for testing and the work has not been performed when a court order to destroy the gun is obtained. In these situations, please contact the Firearms Section to let them know that either the work doesn't need to be done, and the firearm can simply be destroyed, or the firearm still needs to be worked but can be destroyed at the completion of the work. A copy of the court order, and a letter informing the laboratory, must be forwarded to the laboratory in either situation.

SECTION VII: LATENT PRINT EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. Digital images must be submitted in a DVD-R or CD-R. Digital images on rewritable media will not be accepted.
2. When requesting comparisons to known print cards already on file, the DCI number(s) or FBI Universal Control Number(s) must be provided along with the name(s) of the person(s) of interest.
 - A. A name and other secondary identifier, such as date of birth (DOB) or social security number (SSN), will not be used to locate known print records.
3. DRUG EVIDENCE
 - A. Latent print examinations **will not** be performed on drug cases when the drug evidence is taken off the suspect's person, unless the submission receives prior approval from the Latent Print Section Supervisor or designee.
 - B. When possible, controlled substances must be separated from its packaging prior to being submitted for latent print examination. To minimize safety risks, drug contamination should not be present on the exterior of the packaging items.
 1. Exception: Tightly wrapped bricks or bundles do not need to be separated. The outsides will be processed prior to analysis of drug material within.
 - C. Small, tied-off corners of plastic bags **will not** be accepted or examined for latent prints. These items do not provide sufficient surface area for successful processing.
 - D. Due to the safety risks involved, please consider the necessity of latent print examination for drug evidence that has tested positive for substances which are dangerous in small quantities (i.e., fentanyl). When latent analysis is necessary, please mark outer packaging accordingly and contact the Latent Print supervisor, or designee, for their awareness.
 - E. Drug paraphernalia, with the exception of scales, **will not** be examined for latent prints. This includes the following items:
 1. Smoking devices
 2. Spoons
 3. Syringes
 4. Grinders
 - F. Evidence from clandestine drug labs will be limited to five (5) items, unless the submission receives prior approval from the Latent Print Examiner following discussion with the submitting agency. The following items **will not** be examined for latent prints:
 1. Tubing
 2. Grinders
 3. Blister packs

4. Disassembled batteries
4. Individual pieces of ammunition and fired cartridge cases **will not** be accepted for latent print examination, with the exception of death investigation cases. Ammunition boxes will be accepted for latent print examination.
5. Oversized, stationary, and permanent items will not be accepted for latent print examination, unless the submission receives prior approval from the Latent Print Section Supervisor or designee. Latent prints on these types of items are likely to be damaged during handling, packaging, and transportation to the laboratory.
 - A. This includes the following items:
 1. Doors & windows
 - a. Exception: doors may be submitted for footwear examination.
 2. Furniture, including drawers
 3. Televisions with a screen size larger than 42"/larger than a computer monitor.
 4. Bikes
 5. Items in excess of fifty (50) pounds
 - B. It is recommended that these items be processed on-site, in the field, with powder. Developed latent prints may then be photographed, lifted and submitted for latent print examination. The following resources provide information on powdering and lifting techniques.
 1. How to Process Latent Fingerprints Using Magnetic Powder (National Forensic Academy)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jkmxcywAdhg>
 2. How to Process Latent Fingerprints Using Non-Magnetic Powder (National Forensic Academy)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V7G5lp6QigQ>
 3. Forensic Education Basic Fingerprint Lifting (Michael McCutcheon)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ph0QOPhrnEQ>
6. Evidence from the following crimes **will not** be accepted or examined for latent prints, unless the submission receives prior approval by the Latent Print Section Supervisor or designee:
 - A. Felon in possession cases when the firearm is taken off the person.
 1. When the firearm is not taken off the person, only the firearm will be examined (ammunition will not).
 - B. Found property (not involved in a criminal act).
 - C. Criminal mischief with damages less than \$1,000.00

SECTION VIII: TOXICOLOGY EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. It is strongly recommended the subject's or victim's name be placed on the cup, bottle vial, etc. that contains the biological specimen. In addition, label the specimen kit or any other packaging materials per Iowa Administrative Code 661.157.3(7) which states "the peace officer shall label the container showing the date and time the sample was collected and identifying the peace officer, the subject, and the person present during the collection of the sample if other than the peace officer."
2. Specimens for urine alcohol testing must be submitted in a 10mL grey stoppered tube containing 100 mg sodium fluoride. Refer to Iowa Administrative Code 661.157.3(4) which states "when collection of the sample for alcohol testing has been completed, the peace officer shall cause a portion of the collected sample to be transferred to a test tube containing 100 milligrams of sodium fluoride and anticoagulant."

SECTION IX: TRACE EVIDENCE SUBMISSIONS

1. When submitting paint, fibers, or other trace samples, known samples are needed for comparison and are highly encouraged when chemical composition is requested
2. Soil Samples are accepted only if being submitted for ignitable liquid, explosive or chemical content testing.
 - A. Samples should be submitted in an air tight container, such as a clean, unused paint can.
 - B. Soil samples should be kept frozen.
3. Fiber Samples submitted should be those pulled or tweezed only
 - A. Chemist fold in clean paper and place in an envelope.
 - B. Multiple areas (not fibers) are different exhibits.
 - C. Knowns may be sampled by cutting a representative area (2 inch by 2 inch) down to substrate.
4. Paint Submissions
 - A. Scrape down to the substrate (Cars: metal; Structures: wood) and keep the large layered flakes
 - B. Chemist fold in clean paper and place in an envelope
5. Tools for Unknown Substance
 - A. Loosely cover end of tool with clean paper
 - B. Don't tape over tool or substance
6. Multiple known samples, from different areas, can be the same exhibit.
 - A. Multiple unknown samples, from different areas, should be separate exhibits.
 1. They should also be itemized separately when pre-logging.
7. Perishables or Aqueous Solutions
 - A. Need to be kept cool or frozen.