



HAMILTON COUNTY CORONER & CRIME LABORATORY

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Evidence Submission Guidelines

This document contains the current guidelines for the submission of evidence for analysis at the Hamilton County Coroner and Crime Laboratory. This document is meant to serve as a guide for submitting agencies. Evidence must be packaged to protect from loss, cross transfer, cross contamination and/or deleterious change. 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 (513) 946-8750 or by email if you have questions regarding submission of evidence:

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Laura Kimble	Controlled Substances	laura.kimble@hamilton-co.org
Bob Topmiller	Toxicology	bob.topmiller@hamilton-co.org
Emily Weber	Trace Evidence/Fire Debris	emily.weber@hamilton-co.org

General Information

- ☐ The Laboratory shall only accept evidence for analysis associated with criminal investigations from government agencies for criminal prosecution. Evidence will not be accepted from private attorneys or individuals.
- ☐ The Laboratory reserves the right to decline acceptance or not conduct analysis of evidence deemed unsuitable, insufficient in quantity/quality, of limited value, or if analysis is outside the scope of this laboratory's accreditation. The customer will be notified if evidence is not accepted by the laboratory. If evidence is accepted but not analyzed, the customer shall be informed on a report that an item of evidence was not analyzed.
- ☐ Laboratory staff shall determine the test methods or procedures to be performed, the scope of analysis, and the items to be analyzed according to Laboratory guidelines. The Laboratory acknowledges that each case is unique and shall conduct the most appropriate analysis possible.
- ☐ The Laboratory may conduct additional testing beyond the forensic examinations requested. The customer shall be informed by a report of the types of forensic examinations performed.

☐ All information obtained or created during the performance of forensic examinations are considered confidential investigatory records of a law enforcement agency and are not subject to public disclosure without due process of the law. Information may be released to a member of a criminal justice agency who has a need and right to know or with a valid court order.

Forensic Biology

- ☐ **All evidence openings must be sealed** with tamperproof evidence tape with the sealer's initials and the date of sealing clearly written across the seal.
- ☐ Potentially hazardous evidence must be packaged to ensure safe handling. Examples include: glass, knives, guns, etc. should be packaged in boxes.
- ☐ Evidence items should be packaged separately to avoid direct contact that could result in cross transfer.
- ☐ Biological evidence should be dried and packaged in paper to prevent deterioration of evidence.
- ☐ All items of evidence should be appropriately labeled. DNA reference standard packages must be clearly labeled with the name of the donor. Evidence items packages must be clearly labeled with the source.
- ☐ In order to establish CODIS eligibility, a summary narrative of the case facts (i.e.. police report) should be provided. The narrative should include information as to how the evidence relates to the crime. The documentation should include where the evidence was located within the crime scene and how it relates to a putative perpetrator. A CODIS entry will only be made when the narrative is able to clearly connect a crime scene to another crime scene, or to a possible suspect in the crime.

Firearms/Toolmarks

- ☐ **All evidence openings must be sealed** with tamperproof evidence tape with the sealer's initials and the date of sealing clearly written across the seal.
- ☐ Package and submit the firearm **unloaded**. If loaded firearms must be submitted, the Property Room and/or laboratory personnel accepting the evidence must be notified of the loaded condition of the firearm prior to submission of the firearm.
- ☐ The purpose of correctly packaging firearms is to protect the breechface and bore from damage.
- ☐ Firearms should not be dismantled before packaging as this could alter their evidentiary value.
- ☐ DO NOT place metal in the bore, breech or magazine well.
- ☐ Loaded magazines and unfired cartridges should be removed and secured with the associated firearm.

- Fired cartridge cases and unfired cartridges should be individually packaged by placing them in a sealed pill box or envelope and pertinent information placed on the container
- Containers can vary from boxes, evidence envelopes, coin envelopes, plastic bags, etc. The important consideration is to protect the item to be examined from loss or contamination. Firearms should be properly packaged in a box or gun envelope. Again, the container should be sealed, dated and initialed.

Controlled Substances

- **All evidence openings must be sealed** with tamperproof evidence tape with the sealer's initials/badge number and the date of sealing clearly written across the seal.
- **All evidence should be packaged in a manner that protects the integrity of each item** submitted within the outer evidence packaging and the outer packaging itself. Wet items should be dried prior to submission.
- **Do not overstuff evidence packaging.** Items in vacuum sealed bags or kilo wrappings double or triple in size once the vacuum or seal is broken. If we cannot return all the evidence in the original packaging, we reserve the right to call the agency to submit additional packaging.
- **NO items should be submitted in gloves.** This creates a safety hazard for our analysts **AND** evidence could get lost in one of the fingers and may not be analyzed.
 - Use a paper fold, a small plastic bag, a small manila envelope, or a sharps tube if evidence needs to be further secured.
- **Chemical Hazards must be clearly indicated** on the outer packaging, either written or with a sticker and on the submission sheet. Examples of chemical hazards include fentanyl, sodium hydroxide (lye), and sulfuric acid. *Chemical hazards are not the same as biohazards.*
- **Biohazards must be clearly indicated** with a biohazard sticker on the outer evidence packaging and on the submission sheet, with the specific biohazard indicated on the sticker (blood, body cavity, saliva, feces, etc.).
- **Sharps hazards must be clearly indicated** on the outer packaging and on the submission sheet and packaged in such a way as to prevent injury, with the specific hazard indicated (broken glass, razor blade, etc.).
- **Hypodermic needles/syringes must** be submitted in a plastic sharps safety tube. Seal both ends if you are not submitting the tube within an evidence envelope. *Hypodermic syringes can be both a sharps hazard and a biohazard.*
- **Powder drug evidence should be packaged in the appropriately sized packaging** or submitted within a folded piece of paper.
 - Powder submitted loose in an evidence envelope could be lost through the corners of the envelope which would lessen the total weight of the powder to be analyzed.
 - A small amount of powder submitted loose in a large plastic bag could turn a small amount of powder into a residue due to static electricity.
- **Fresh plant material from grow operations should be dried before submitting to the laboratory** for analysis. Once dried it should be submitted in a **paper bag**. Absolutely no plastic or plastic bags should be used for packaging.

- Packaging plant material with residual moisture in a plastic bag or plastic could lead to decomposition of the plant material (molding) and render further analysis difficult.
- **Liquids must be submitted in a leak-proof container.**
 - Urine specimen cups and plastic centrifuge tubes are not leak-proof.
 - If submitting liquid for alcohol identification, only a small amount of liquid is needed (around a capful). Do not submit six-packs or cases of alcohol.
- **Do not submit field test kits (NIK kits).** These kits can leak and compromise the integrity of the evidence. Do not apply test kit chemicals directly to items to be submitted to the laboratory as these chemicals can destroy the evidence and prevent analysis.
- **If the packaging guidelines are not followed, the laboratory reserves the right to send improperly packaged evidence back to the agency without analysis.**

Toxicology

For OVI submissions:

- Submitting agencies are responsible for the proper specimen collection and preservation as dictated by the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) chapter 3701-53-05.
- Blood specimens must be collected into a vacuum container tube with a solid anticoagulant.

Two examples:

1. Grey top vacuum tube with potassium oxalate and sodium fluoride
2. Grey top vacuum tube with disodium (Na₂) EDTA and sodium fluoride

Other acceptable tubes:

1. Lavender top vacuum tube with potassium (K₂ or K₃) EDTA
2. Light blue top vacuum tube with sodium citrate
3. Green top vacuum tube with sodium or lithium heparin
4. Red top vacuum tube with no additive

- Urine specimens may be collected into a clean leakproof glass or plastic container/tube with a lid. A sodium fluoride capsule may be added to the specimen at the discretion of the submitting agency.
- Plasma/serum specimens may be collected in plastic or glass tubes, gold or red/grey top vacuum tubes with clot activator and gel for serum separation, or red top vacuum tube.
- All blood, serum, plasma, and urine specimens submitted to the laboratory must be refrigerated except during transit or when under examination, in accordance with OAC chapter 3701-53-05(F).

For DFC/Miscellaneous submissions:

- These submissions **do not have** to conform to the standards spelled out in the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC) chapter 3701-53-05 for OVI cases.
- It is recommended that each submitted specimen tube or container should be labeled with the name of the individual from whom the specimen was collected and the date and time of collection.

- ☐ Each submitted specimen tube or container should be sealed with evidence tape and the sealer's initials and date.

Fire Debris

- ☐ **All evidence openings must be sealed** with tamperproof evidence tape with the sealer's initials and the date of sealing clearly written across the seal.
- ☐ All suspected ignitable liquid related evidence should be submitted to the laboratory as soon as possible.
- ☐ Submit comparison (control) samples when possible.
- ☐ Submit evidence in airtight containers such as nylon heat-seal bags or paint cans.
- ☐ Evidence containing suspected ignitable liquid (such as gas cans or charcoal lighter fluid bottles) requiring latent prints or DNA examination should have all of the liquid removed before submission.
- ☐ All liquid samples should be secured against breakage and leakage.

Trace Evidence

- ☐ **All evidence openings must be sealed** with tamperproof evidence tape with the sealer's initials and the date of sealing clearly written across the seal.
- ☐ Potentially hazardous evidence (i.e. glass, knives, etc.) must be packaged to ensure safe handling.
- ☐ Package questioned and known items separately. The package label should clearly indicate whether the contents are questioned or known items.
- ☐ Small evidence items (i.e. hairs, fibers, glass, paint chips, etc.) must be submitted in an inner package. Preferred inner package is a paper packet.
- ☐ Primer gunshot residue sample collection must be performed using Scanning Electron Microscope (SEM) lifters only.
- ☐ Impression evidence (i.e. photographs, lifts, casts, etc.) should be submitted in a manner so that items are kept flat and protected from damage.
- ☐ Explosives must be rendered safe prior to submission.
- ☐ For more specific information on how to collect and/or package items for submission to the laboratory, please call the laboratory or download the Trace Evidence Collection App. This application is available for Apple iOS and Google Android devices. Visit <https://forensiccoe.org/trace-evidence-collection-mobile-app/> for more information.