



Maine Center for Disease
Control and Prevention

An Office of the
Department of Health and Human Services

EVIDENCE RECEIVING PROCEDURES

Evidence Receiving Procedures Manual

FORENSIC CHEMISTRY SECTION

Maine Health and Environmental Testing Laboratory

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

*Evidence Receiving Procedures Manual: Doc # = 006
Originally issued July 2006*

*Approved by: Forensic Lab Director – L. Niskach
Date Revised: 21Apr23*

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The Forensic Lab Director / Quality Manager review this document at least annually. Changes, if any, are authorized by the Forensic Lab Director / Quality Manager. Old procedures are archived and retained in the laboratory for at least two years. Staff acknowledge the updated procedures.



1) EVIDENCE RECEIVING

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this section is to describe the requirements for the receipt, handling and storage of all evidence submitted/received in the laboratory.

1.2 Scope

This section provides guidelines in making decisions pertinent to the validity and acceptability of samples submitted for testing or analysis.

1.3 Specific Objectives

1.3.1 EVIDENCE INTEGRITY

All items submitted to the HETL for forensic analysis must be presented in a manner that ensures the integrity of the evidence. This requirement will be accomplished through:

- 1.3.1.1 The evidence or its container should be marked with a unique case identifier such as, suspect's name or agency's/HETL case number.
- 1.3.1.2 All evidence should be submitted under proper seal. Proper seal is defined as: a seal that prevents loss, cross-transfer, or contamination while ensuring that attempted entry into the container is detectable. A proper seal may include a heat seal, tape seal, or a lock. The initials or other identification of the person creating the seal shall be placed on the seal or across the seal onto the container when possible.
- 1.3.1.3 The tape, heat or adhesive seal used to seal container(s) should be initialed.
- 1.3.1.4 Evidence not submitted as described in 1.3.1.2 above will be properly sealed by the recipient using one of the following:



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- 1.3.1.4.1 Placing a piece of evidence tape across the seal or container with the initials of the person receiving the evidence.
- 1.3.1.4.2 Resealing the package in another container with proper initials.
- 1.3.1.5 It shall be recorded on the evidence submission form, that the evidence was received 'unsealed' or lacked initials.
- 1.3.1.6 Evidence not submitted as described in 1.3.1.3 above will be initialed by the person receiving the evidence.
- 1.3.1.7 If photographic evidence is needed to document the condition of the evidence, a state issued camera shall be used to photograph the evidence. Photographs shall be printed, marked with the HETL Folder Number, initialed and dated by the individual taking the picture, and stored in the corresponding case folder.

1.3.2 EVIDENCE DELIVERED TO THE HETL VIA DELIVERY SERVICE

Evidence delivered to the HETL via postal service, FedEx and UPS will be immediately forwarded to authorized recipients.

- 1.3.2.1 The containers should be submitted under proper seal as stated in 1.3.1.2 and 1.3.1.3. For items which are not properly sealed at time of submission the recipient will seal the item in accordance with 1.3.1.4.1 and 1.3.1.4.2, and make note of its unsealed condition or lack of initials on the Receipt/Contract Request Form (see 1.3.1.5 and 1.3.1.6)

1.3.3 HAND DELIVERED ITEMS

Hand delivered items, which are not presented according to 1.3.1.2 and 1.3.1.3: the submitter will be provided with materials (tape, bags,



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marker, etc.) necessary to properly seal the evidence.

1.3.4 EVIDENCE CONTROL

- 1.3.4.1 At the time of, (or in close proximity to) receipt, each case will receive a laboratory identification number. Case identification numbers are assigned through Starlims, the Laboratory Information Management System.
- 1.3.4.2 The Receipt/Contract for Examination form will accompany submissions to the HETL Forensic Chemistry Section. A description of the evidence and packaging, as received, shall be recorded on the form. The receipt will be completed in triplicate and the copies distributed as follows:
 - 1.3.4.2.1 White form to submitter (or retained in the case file for samples submitted via postal service, Fed EX, etc).
 - 1.3.4.2.2 Yellow form copy to case file
 - 1.3.4.2.3 Pink form (or Internal Chain of Custody) retained with the evidence or placed in the Accountability file until evidence is transferred to analyst for analysis.
- 1.3.4.3 The recipient initially accepting the evidence for HETL will mark all evidence and corresponding paperwork for identification with the **laboratory number** and the recipient's initials. This may be accomplished by writing directly on the evidence, or by applying a label.
- 1.3.4.4 The evidence will then be placed in secure storage, either in the evidence refrigerator, evidence freezer or evidence room.
 - 1.3.4.4.1 Any evidence with the potential for decomposition (e.g. biologicals, mushrooms or other food like substances) shall be placed into an evidence freezer upon submission. Mushroom samples will be examined as soon as possible to prevent potential decomposition.



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- 1.3.4.5 Upon relinquishing control of evidence, transfers will be noted on the Internal Chain of Custody Form (Pink copy).
- 1.3.4.6 Evidence may be mailed or shipped to the laboratory. All mailed or shipped evidence should be via U.S. Certified Mail, return receipt requested, FedEx, etc. When shipping any evidence by other than the U.S. Postal Service, the submitter should provide return receipt and be able to track shipment.
- 1.3.4.7 Upon receipt of **solid dose drug** evidence, the sealed package weight (SPW) should be obtained and recorded on the receipt/contract for examination form and the sealed container (i.e., evidence).
- 1.3.4.8 Upon receipt of **Drug Facilitated Crime/Drug Facilitated Crime Sexual Assault/Gross Sexual Assault (DFC/DFCSA/GSA)** evidence the Drug Facilitated Crime Laboratory Analysis Request Form shall be given to the submitter or the submitting agency to fill out. All DFC casefiles shall immediately be submitted to the forensic laboratory director or authorized chemist to determine course of testing with the investigating officer/submitting agency.
- 1.3.4.9 The Internal Chain of Custody form will be completed and then both the chain of custody and Receipt/Contract for Examination form are placed in the appropriate accountability file or stored with the evidence. Accountability files are located in the evidence suite for all pending cases, and in the evidence suite or toxicology labs for all tested cases, until destruction or return of the evidence.
- 1.3.4.10 While opening or sealing evidence, the following should be avoided, where possible:
 - 1.3.4.9.1 Using staples to seal any packaging
 - 1.3.4.9.2 Obliteration of original seal or initials
 - 1.3.4.9.3 Obliteration or sealing over agency barcodes



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2) STARLIMS: PROCEDURE TO ENTER EVIDENCE AND CREATE CASES

Purpose

This document sets forth the policy of the Health & Environmental Testing Laboratory's Forensic Chemistry Section regarding login (creation) of cases and samples.

Scope

This section outlines the basic procedures for evidence submitted to the FCS for analysis. It is not designed to be a step-by-step manual for the use of the Starlims software package.

Specific Objectives

- 1.1 Log into Starlims using your unique user name and password
- 1.2 Add case
- 1.3 Add samples to the case
- 1.4 Print and attach labels
- 1.5 Weigh and record Sealed Package Weight for solid dose drug cases only
- 1.6 Complete chain of custody information
- 1.7 Assign case to appropriate section (e.g., blood alcohol, urine drugs, solid dose drugs chemistry)

3) Evidence Return and/or Destruction

Purpose

This section deals with: 1. The return of evidence to the submitting agency after analysis by the Forensic Chemistry Section, and 2. The destruction of evidence if the submitting agency so requests the evidence to be destroyed.

- 1.1 Evidence will be returned to the submitting agency, DA Office, etc following the same basic procedure as evidence receipt, simply in reverse order. That is, the chain of custody is signed releasing the sealed item(s) of evidence back to the submitting agency, (i.e., customer).



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1.2 The specific policy regarding evidence to be destroyed is detailed within the Standard Policies and Procedures Manual, available on SharePoint.

Revision History

| Revision Number | Date | Changes |
|-----------------|----------------|--|
| *1 | April 12, 2022 | Section 1 updated to include procedure for lack of initials. 1.3.4.8 updated to remove room number. 1.3.4.2 updated to state the receipt form will document a description of the evidence and packaging, as submitted. |
| 2 | July 27, 2022 | Removed specific room numbers and replaced with location descriptions to prepare for lab relocation. Removed address from first page. Added guidance in section 1.3 for photographing evidence. |
| 3 | April 21, 2023 | Section 1.3.4.8 added, previous 1.3.4.8 renumbered to 1.3.4.9 and updated. Section 1.3.4.10 added. Section 1.3.1.2 1.3.1.2 definition updated to match Quality Manual |
| | | |

*Please see SharePoint for previous revisions

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