



Maine State Police Crime Laboratory

LIMS and Case Management

1. Scope

This policy outlines the laboratory's policies on using LIMS (Laboratory Information Management System) and how the cases are assigned and managed throughout the laboratory. The LIMS system provides laboratory staff with access to the data and information needed to perform laboratory activities.

2. Case Management

- 2.1 Cases should be given a priority so the most efficient use of the laboratory resources is ensured. It is the responsibility of each Section Supervisor to ensure proper management of case submissions for each section.
- 2.2 Case priority must be based upon a number of factors, such as degree of crime, scheduled court date, potential value to on-going investigation, etc. These factors should be evaluated carefully for each case, consistent with the overall mission of the laboratory when assigning case priority. Typically, the case priority is as follows:
 - 2.2.1 Crimes against persons:
 - Homicides
 - Sex crimes against minors (defined in the laboratory as anyone under 18)
 - Sex crimes
 - Robbery
 - Assaults
 - 2.2.2 Crimes against property:
 - Arson
 - Burglary, high loss value
 - Burglary
 - Other property crimes
- 2.3 Homicide cases should be processed in such a way as to allow each section 30 days to process the evidence. All laboratory homicide reports should be disseminated from the laboratory within 90 days of the initial meeting with the investigating and prosecuting agencies or the receipt of the majority of the evidence, whichever is later.
- 2.4 Case evidence submissions may require analysis by more than one section. Proper communication between sections is essential to ensure that all necessary analyses are performed.



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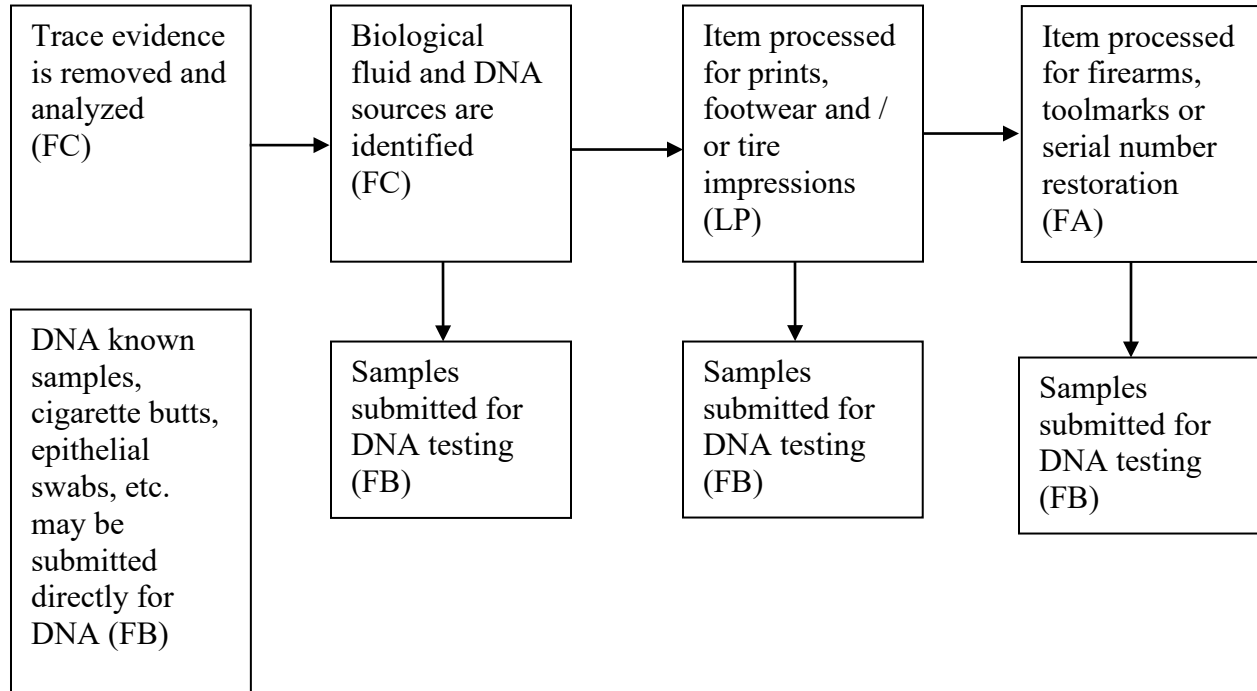
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- 2.5 The Lab Sergeant, or designee, is the liaison between the lab staff and outside agencies. The liaison is responsible for ensuring proper communication occurs when evidence needs to be examined by multiple entities.
- 2.6 If a request for analysis is unclear, the assigned scientist/examiner should contact a Section Supervisor and/or the submitting agency to establish a clear understanding of the request before proceeding. Any unresolved issues should be brought to the attention of a Supervisor.
- 2.7 If a request for analysis or re-analysis is received from the defense, a Court Order or an order from the appropriate prosecutor must be obtained to release evidence to a specific individual or laboratory. The original Case File will contain information that will document any actions taken.
- 2.8 If a request for analysis from a law enforcement agency is received for a type of analysis that is beyond the scope of those currently performed at the Maine State Police Crime Laboratory, the Director or his designee will refer the requested analysis to the appropriate agency.
- 2.9 Evidence is typically processed using the following scheme. Steps may be skipped if those examinations are not requested upon submission or through conversation with the investigator.



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2.10 If evidence needs to be processed by multiple sections, the examiners will be aware of the evidentiary needs of the other sections. Steps will be taken to ensure the preservation of the evidence for other examinations.

2.11 Prior to returning evidence to Evidence Receiving the analyst shall check for additional requests in LIMS. If there are additional requests the analyst shall notify the appropriate section and then make arrangements for transfer to the section or return the evidence to the incoming evidence locker.

3. Using LIMS

3.1 All evidence received by the laboratory will be entered into the LIMS system.

3.2 Each piece of evidence will be uniquely identified with a laboratory number and item number.

3.3 All sub-items will be entered into LIMS. Sub-items are defined as any item of evidence or portion of an item that is removed from the parent item and will have a separate chain of custody than the parent item. Examples include the following:

- A cutting of a bloodstained item is removed by Forensic Chemistry and submitted to Forensic Biology for DNA testing.



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- Firearms test fire materials are retained at the laboratory where the parent item will be returned to the investigating agency.
- DNA extracts are retained at the laboratory where the parent item will be returned to the investigating agency.

3.4 Items that are not considered sub-items are not required to be itemized in LIMS.

Examples include the following:

- Items in a sex crimes kit that are not removed for further testing.
- Latent lift cards that are placed back in the container with the parent item.
- Microscope slides that are packaged with the parent item.

3.5 Any item that is removed from the parent item, but not sub-itemed in LIMS, must be returned to the package with the parent item.



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- 3.6 Work product does not need to be sub-itemed in LIMS. Work product is defined as any material that is generated as a function of analysis that will not be retained for future testing. Examples include the following:
- Aliquots of DNA product for quantitation, amplification and sequencing
 - Cutting or portion of a sample for microchemical testing or immunochromatography
 - Samples used in or consumed by instrumental analysis.
- 3.7 All laboratory reports are written and stored in LIMS.
- 3.8 Technical and administrative reviews will be documented in LIMS whenever practicable.
- 3.9 Each transfer of evidence within the Crime Laboratory shall be a secured transfer whether it is from a person to person or from a person to a storage location.
- 3.9.1 The preferable method of secured transfer is by using each person's secure pin number within LIMS.
- 3.9.2 A signed receipt may be used and retained in a case file in place of a pin secured transfer or in addition to a pin secured transfer if circumstances dictate the signed receipt transfer (For example, if LIMS is temporarily unable to print a receipt). In these circumstances in which a transfer took place without the use of LIMS, the chain of continuity must be made accurate in LIMS by the LIMS administrator as soon as is reasonably possible by means of an unsecured transfer.
- 3.10 Evidence transfers in LIMS should be as accurate as possible. For example, evidence that is physically located in a storage area should be reflected as such in LIMS and vice versa.
- 4. LIMS Administration**
- 4.1 The Director will designate a member of the lab staff to serve as the LIMS administrator. The LIMS administrator is responsible for all software updates, troubleshooting, and making administrative changes to LIMS.
- 4.2 The LIMS system shall be validated by the laboratory prior to use or when changes or modifications are made. The LIMS administrator is responsible for the validation, maintaining the appropriate documentation and authorizing use of the system.
- 4.3 Any administrative change requests to LIMS should be approved by the Section Supervisor of the person requesting the change. Examples include:



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- Scientist name and title change
 - Adding new storage location or changing the name of an existing storage location
 - Deleting requests or evidence items
- 4.4 The LIMS Administrator has the ability to make changes to the chain of custody in LIMS. However, routine errors, such as forgetting to transfer an item, should be addressed by the individual examiner.
- 4.4.1 To address a routine error, transfer the item of evidence in LIMS to the appropriate location as soon as the error is identified.
- 4.4.2 A note must be recorded in the Notes field of the evidence item detail in LIMS to indicate that the chain of custody was being corrected. The note should indicate how and when the chain of custody was corrected, followed by the date and initials of the person making the correction.
- 4.5 The LIMS Administrator will make chain of custody changes to LIMS in the event that LIMS is not available for the receipt or return of a piece of evidence. Administrative changes to chain of custody must be approved by the Section Supervisor of the person requesting the change. Documentation of the change must be included in the case folder or in LIMS, whichever is appropriate.
- 4.6 Failures of the LIMS system shall be recorded as a nonconformance in Paradigm.
- 4.7 The LIMS system is managed and maintained by the Office of Information Technology in conjunction with an offsite vendor.