



# ARKANSAS STATE CRIME LABORATORY



## *HOPE REGIONAL LABORATORY EVIDENCE RECEIVING QUALITY MANUAL*

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## **PURPOSE / INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this manual is to establish written guidelines governing the operation of the Evidence Receiving section of the Hope Regional Laboratory. The desire is that this manual will help promote the efficient and effective operation of the section, assist the laboratory staff in performing their assigned duties and tasks, and to ensure quality in the section's work.

The broad goal of the section is: To carefully handle each piece of evidence in our custody in order to maintain the integrity of the evidentiary chain of custody, by ensuring that evidence is properly secured, stored, can be readily retrieved, and that any changes in its custody have been accurately and fully documented.

This manual does not address every possible facet of evidence handling. However, it is intended to provide information sufficiently specific that, if adhered to, will result in a more effective and efficient process. If a subject is not mentioned in this manual or further clarification is necessary the Forensic Chemistry Supervisor shall be contacted.

## EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

### *Forensic Chemistry Supervisor*

See Employee History Binder.

### *Evidence Technician*

Must be a high school graduate, be familiar with chain of custody as it applies to the criminal justice system, and must be computer literate and able to type accurately.

## EVIDENCE DUTIES

### *Forensic Chemistry Supervisor*

- Supervise the daily activities of the technicians.
- Maintain records of all personnel assigned to the evidence section including time sheets, vacation and overtime requests.
- Schedule work assignments and review work of the technicians.
- Responsible for the storage and safekeeping of all evidence and the management of the section.
- Responsible for maintaining an effective and efficient system for the management and security of evidence.
- Must be ready to testify in court to the evidence receiving and storage procedures.
- Must be able to handle all personnel problems within the section.
- Must be able to perform all duties required of the technicians.

### *Evidence Technician*

- Responsible for receiving evidence, data entry of all evidence into the computer, attaching barcode(s), storage and retrieving of evidence.
- Check in and check out of evidence to analysts or examiners.
- Pick-up, mail-out, and distribution of mail for the agency.
- Available to testify in court.
- Keep evidence receiving and storage area clean.
- Correct errors in the computer.
- Correct storage of evidence.
- Perform inventories.

## **EVIDENCE STORAGE ACCESS**

Access to the evidence storage area is restricted to authorized personnel, which includes all analysts and evidence technicians on permanent assignment at the Hope Regional Laboratory. Any other access must be escorted and recorded in a log.

The following people shall not require an escort while inside of the secured area: Executive Director, Assistant Director, Scientific Operations Director, Information Technology Manager or any other lab personnel as may be deemed necessary by the Executive Director for the operation of the section.

## PROCEDURES

### *General Procedures*

Evidence technicians should only accept submission sheets that are typewritten or completed legibly in ink and provide the minimum required information for data entry. The evidence technician will determine if a new laboratory case number is needed or if there has been a previous submission on this case. The submitting agency/officer should indicate in the appropriate area whether previous submissions exist.

All corrections or changes to the submission sheet by ASCL personnel shall be done with a single line striking through the original text and initialed by the person making the correction. Information on the submission sheet may not be obliterated or erased and the use of correction fluid or tape shall be prohibited. ASCL personnel should encourage submitting officers to use the same procedure if the officer determines that a correction is needed.

Suspect and victim names will be entered into LIMS-plus only if both the first and last names of the individual are supplied on the submission sheet. Individuals referred to by aliases or without both first and last names will not be entered.

### *Receiving Evidence*

#### **I. Hand Carried Evidence**

- A. Submission Form:** Check that the submitting officer has printed and signed their name in the boxes labeled "Submitting Officer" and "Signature".
  
- B. Evidence Container:** Check that the evidence is in an approved container and the container has a proper seal. An evidence container has a proper seal if its contents cannot readily escape and if opening the container would result in obvious damage or alteration to the container and/or its seal. To be a proper seal, the initials or other identification of the person sealing the evidence, must be on each seal.

The evidence container and seal should be constructed of material adequate to prevent being easily ripped or torn inadvertently during the normal handling process. The

material should also be conducive to the placement of barcode labels and marking with a permanent type marker. All evidence containers should conform to the following standards:

- Envelopes should measure 4" x 8" or larger (legal size).
- Boxes should not be any larger than 15" x 24" x 46".
- Paper sacks will be accepted as long as they measure at least 4" x 8".
- Whenever practical, containers should weigh twenty five (25) pounds or less.
- Sharps, such as a syringe, knife or ice pick should be packaged in a hard puncture resistant package.
- Suitcases, duffle bags, backpacks, knap sacks, pillow cases, garbage bags or other similar type containers are not acceptable as evidence containers.

**C. LIMS-plus Data Entry:**

1. Create a submission
2. Add Offenses
3. Add Suspects, Victims
4. Create Items & Requests

**D. Repeat previous steps until all cases are complete.**

**E. Final case processing**

1. Provide one (1) copy of the submission sheet to the submitting officer to serve as their receipt.
2. Attach the second copy to the corresponding piece of evidence. Place the evidence in the appropriate section of the evidence room.
3. Scan an image of the submission sheet into the case's 'Case Images' folder



## II. Mailed Evidence

**Note:** Latex gloves *must* be worn while opening all mail received evidence.

If the submission sheet is not attached to the outside of the package, the evidence technician will open the package, remove the submission sheet and reseal the container as prescribed. The case is then processed using the procedure from section 5.2 Receiving Hand Carried Evidence.

If a submission is found to be improperly packaged the evidence technician will make every attempt to correct the problem. If this is impossible or unsafe to do, the submitting agency will be contacted about the problem. The Forensic Chemistry Supervisor will then determine whether the evidence will be returned to the submitting agency by mail or held for them to pick up.

## III. Releasing Evidence

The accurate release of evidence is of the utmost importance. Proper procedure must be followed to ensure that the release is correct and proper. All evidence is treated as the property of the submitting agency listed on the submission sheet. Therefore evidence normally should only be released to a representative of the submitting agency.

However, a submitting agency may arrange for a representative to pick up their evidence. Evidence will only be released to such a representative after obtaining written permission (on agency letterhead) from the submitting agency authorizing such action. Once this authorization is on file, the individual's privilege to pick up evidence for the authorizing agency will be effective indefinitely or until withdrawn by the agency.

ASCL personnel may request unfamiliar individuals that arrive to pick up evidence to present proper identification and/or authorization.

Under extenuating circumstances a verbal request, if approved by the Forensic Chemistry Supervisor or higher authority, will be sufficient to allow evidence release to a representative for that one time.

Special requests from an agency to mail completed evidence will be allowed only if authorized by the Executive Director, Assistant Director or the Scientific Operations Director.

Have the officer receiving the evidence check the case numbers from the items to be released with those on the printed sheet to make sure all evidence is accounted for. A copy of the release sheet will be made for the officer.

#### **IV. Evidence Storage**

The main evidence storage area holds the majority of the evidence either waiting to be worked or waiting to be released.

##### **A. Evidence Waiting to be Analyzed:**

All evidence waiting for analysis will be stored in numerical order unless an item's size makes this impractical.

##### **B. Evidence Ready to be Returned to the Submitting Agency:**

Evidence which has been processed will be sorted by agency and held in a temporary holding area until the case file clears all administrative and technical reviews. Once the Report of Laboratory Analysis is ready for release, the evidence is transferred to a plastic bin assigned to the appropriate agency unless an item's size makes this impractical.

#### **V. Additional Procedures**

##### **A. Compliance Seals**

If an evidence container is found that does not meet the required standards for properly sealed evidence the ASCL will rectify the situation by creating a proper seal. The seal consists of a piece of Arkansas State Crime Laboratory evidence tape, displaying the initials of the ASCL employee having received the evidence, placed perpendicular across an inadequate officer seal or placed across an accidental hole or tear in the evidence container.

## **B. Money**

### **1. General**

Any money in excess of one hundred dollars (\$100.00) should be secured while being held by the evidence receiving section. Any lesser amount can be placed in the proper place on the shelves.

Any submission or release of money in excess of one hundred dollars will require an actual count and two signatures of verification by those involved in the transfer.

### **2. Receiving Money**

#### **a. Hand Carried Money**

If money is to be tested for the presence of drug residue, the Evidence Technician is to call a Forensic Chemist immediately and the chemist is to assist the officer in shaking down the money. Only the paper containing the shakedown will be submitted to the Forensic Chemistry section. At no time will the chemist take sole possession of the money.

#### **b. Mailed Money**

If money is submitted by mail, the technician logging in the evidence is to immediately inform the Forensic Chemistry Supervisor or higher authority without delay that money has been received. The money, regardless of the amount, is to be counted in the presence of another technician or the Forensic Chemistry Supervisor and will require double initials on the seals. The money will then be assigned a case number and stored in the proper place.

**Note:** If a shortage of money is discovered on a submission that has been received in the mail, the submitting officer or their agency is to be contacted immediately and informed of the shortage. The shortage is to be documented and signed by the technician and section supervisor or higher authority. A copy of the signed documentation is to be sent to the investigating officer and the original will be placed in the case file along with the submission sheet.

### **3. Intra-Agency Transfers Involving Money**

After evidence containing money has been analyzed, the transfer back to Evidence will require an actual count and two signatures or initials on the seal. This will be done by the analyst and the technician conducting the transfer.

#### **4. Releasing Money**

All items containing money must be hand released; it is *never* permissible to return these items to the submitting agency by mail.

The officer to whom the item is being released *must* open the sealed package, count the money, and sign a release form for the exact amount of money received. The evidence technician involved in the transfer will also sign the release form to indicate that the reported amount is correct.

#### **C. Hazardous Materials**

Any evidence known or suspected to be contaminated by communicable diseases or which may be a puncture hazard is to be marked with a biohazard sticker on the packaged evidence and also on the submission sheet.

## **ANNUAL EVIDENCE INVENTORIES**

The evidence receiving section shall conduct an inventory approximately every six months, usually during the months of June and December. This inventory shall apply to and include all evidence held by the Hope Regional Laboratory whether waiting to be analyzed or awaiting release. This shall not include those items held by the laboratory if the status of such evidence is "Retained".

A written report of the inventory shall be made to the office of the Director upon completion.