

TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION
Forensic Services Division

Violent Crime Response Team Standard Operating Procedures
Recording Firearms Evidence



10.15 Firearms Evidence

10.15.1 Purpose

This procedure is intended for the safe identification, evaluation and documentation of firearms evidence at a crime scene.

10.15.2 Equipment and Reagent

Note taking materials
Camera
Packaging materials

10.15.3 Procedure

1. Document the location of each firearm in the scene
2. Record the following (whenever possible):
 - The make, model, caliber, and serial number of all collected firearms
 - The position of the hammer and the action (open or closed)
 - The position of any safeties
3. Package and secure the firearm in an appropriately sized gun box

10.15.3.1 Revolvers

1. Before opening the cylinder of a revolver, make two marks (with a permanent marker) on the top of the cylinder, one on either side of the top strap. These marks will indicate which chamber is in line with the hammer or firing pin.
2. After opening the cylinder, record the following:
 - number of chambers
 - whether the chambers are loaded with unfired ammunition
 - the direction which the cylinder rotates
3. Number the chambers consecutively starting with the next to be fired. This is dependent on which direction the cylinder rotates.
4. Record the manufacturer markings and the condition of the ammunition (fired or unfired) removed from each chamber of the cylinder.

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5. Individually package any fired cartridge cases removed from the cylinder and indicate on the packaging from which cylinder chamber the cartridge case was removed.
6. Package the ammunition removed from the gun separately from any other ammunition recovered at the scene and mark the packaging appropriately.

10.15.3.2 Semi-automatics

1. Remove the magazine by depressing the magazine release. A loaded magazine can be safely packaged separate from the firearm or in the same package as the firearm. It is not necessary to unload the magazine.
2. Clear the chamber by pulling the slide to the rear. Make sure to keep the muzzle of the firearm pointed in a safe direction and keep fingers away from the trigger.

NOTE: Reversing the order of step #1 and 2 will **LOAD** a semiautomatic firearm. Always remove the magazine first.

3. Mark the packaging appropriately.

10.15.3.3 Rifles and Shotguns

When handling a shotgun or rifle equipped with a tubular magazine, use extra caution to make sure the tube is completely empty before any further examination of the weapon. Avoid cycling the loaded ammunition through the firearm.

1. Remove the magazine, if detachable.
2. Clear the chamber by pulling the bolt or action arm to the rear. Make sure to keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction and keep fingers away from the trigger.
3. Package the ammunition recovered from the firearm.
4. Mark the packaging appropriately.

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10.15.3.4 Unfired Ammunition

10.15.3.4.1 Magazines may be packaged with the handgun provided it was collected with the firearm. If not, the magazine should be packaged separately.

10.15.3.4.2 No markings should be placed directly on the ammunition; item markings should be placed on the packaging.

10.15.3.5 Fired Ammunition

10.15.3.5.1 Bullets, bullet fragments, and cartridge cases will be packaged individually in separate containers in the physical condition in which they were found.

10.15.3.5.2 Bullets will be packaged in a manner that will preserve any trace evidence that may be present on it.

10.15.3.5.3 Bullet fragments whose likely origin is a single fragmented projectile may be packaged in a single container.

10.15.3.5.4 Mark the packaging appropriately.