

TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Forensic Services Division



Quality Assurance Manual

Process Requirements-Technical Records

7 Process Requirements

7.5 Technical Records

7.5.1 The following guidelines ensure technical records are properly generated and maintained for all laboratory activities:

- a) Technical records must include all observations, data, and calculations generated at the time the examination/calibration was performed. The examination date(s) must be listed. Date(s) may be expressed as a range with a 'start' and 'stop' date. Once a technical record is created (on any media) the record shall be retained according to Laboratory policy/Unit SOPs.
- b) All documentation should be legible and maintained to facilitate the reproduction of testing/calibration findings.
- c) It is recommended technical records be maintained on the right side of the case file and administrative documentation be maintained on the left side of the case file. Once a case file is complete, all documentation should be securely affixed to the case file.
- d) Technical records shall be uniquely identified and contain the analyst's handwritten initials. Unit SOPs will address specific requirements for identification, as applicable.
- e) When examination documentation records consist of multiple pages, a page numbering system indicating total number of pages must be used (e.g., page ____ of ____).
- f) When documentation is prepared by an individual(s) other than the examiner who interprets the findings, prepares the report and/or testifies concerning the documentation (i.e. trainee), then the individual's handwritten initials will also be on each page of the case documentation representing his/her work.
- g) Personnel responsible for the examination of evidence, the technical reviewer, and the administrative reviewer will be identified electronically in LIMS. For Breath Alcohol calibration activities, these individuals will be identified in the instrument file. Verifications will be recorded in the case file with initials of verifier and the date.
- h) The appropriate Unit SOPs will contain adequate information to identify factors affecting the uncertainty of measurement, if applicable.
- i) The TBI Laboratory number for each case for which data was generated shall be appropriately recorded on the printout when data from multiple cases is recorded on a single printout.

7.5.1.1 The TBI Laboratory will retain all technical and administrative records as part of the TBI Laboratory case/calibration file for a defined period in accordance with State of Tennessee requirements (see policy 8.4.2).

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7.5.1.2 TBI Laboratory units maintain a list of personnel initials/signatures, common abbreviations and/or symbols used within the unit. Generally accepted scientific abbreviations are acceptable in casework and need not be included in the glossary.

7.5.1.3 Documentation will be such that, in the absence of the examiner, another qualified examiner could evaluate the examinations/calibrations performed and interpret the data. When instrumental analyses are conducted, operating parameters will be recorded. Operating parameters may be documented in a test method, recorded in a log book or recorded in the technical record.

7.5.1.4 Technical records will be of a permanent nature. Handwritten technical records will be in ink. Other case documentation will be of a permanent nature; exceptions to this will be on a case-by-case basis determined by environmental or technical conditions. Exceptions will be approved by the crime scene team leader, unit supervisor, and /or technical leader.

7.5.1.5 If an observation, data, or calculation is rejected, the reason, the identity of the individual and the date will be recorded in the technical record.

7.5.1.6 Calibration records will include pre and post data following adjustments/repairs due to a failed calibration.

7.5.2 Changes to technical records will be corrected with an initialed single strike-out and the correction entered alongside. No part of case documentation or records can be erased or otherwise made illegible. Any additions made to case documentation will be initialed by the person making the addition. Any change to calibration documentation will be initialed and dated by the person making the addition. Case status shall be marked as 'Draft Complete' prior to any technical or administrative review of records. This milestone indicates completion of testing. All changes to technical records occurring after the 'Draft Complete' milestone must be tracked with the individual's initials and the date.

7.5.3 In the case of electronically stored records, the case info tab may be utilized for noting any quality related changes made as a result of technical or administrative review. This information may also be documented in the case/instrument file. Any change made to completed technical records generated and/or maintained in an electronic form shall be tracked.

7.5.3 Case Record Security

7.5.3.1 Access to TBI Laboratory files is controlled and held secure and in confidence. Electronic records on the LIMS are maintained and backed up by the TBI Information Systems Division (IS). Access to these records is controlled.

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7.5.3.1 At the discretion of the Crime Laboratory Regional Supervisor, TBI case files may be taken home at the end of a work day for case review or court purposes.

7.5.3.2 Case files taken home for case file review must be able to be recreated should an accident occur. If information contained within the case file cannot be reprinted from computer files, copies must be made prior to taking the files home and must be retained at the laboratory.

7.5.3.3 Case files taken home must be returned to the laboratory the next day, if possible. Employees should minimize the time case files are outside of the laboratory during regular business hours.

7.5.3.4 Case files shall be taken directly home. They must be transported in such a way as to prevent the possibility of loss.

7.5.3.5 A list shall be compiled and remain at the laboratory as a record of all cases being taken home. This list does not have to be retained following the return of all case files to the laboratory. This excludes case files being taken home for court appearances.

7.5.3.6 Retired or former TBI employees needing case files for court appearances may check files out as required. A record of this will be kept at each applicable laboratory until the case file is returned.