



TENNESSEE BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

Forensic Services Division

Toxicology Quality Assurance and Procedures Manual

7.0 Evidence Handling

7.0 EVIDENCE HANDLING

The following applies to the receiving, processing, storage, and final disposition of evidence for the Toxicology Unit.

7.1 Evidence Types

The Toxicology Unit analyzes samples submitted by law enforcement or medicolegal officials to aid in determining the absence or presence of alcohol, drugs, and/or other chemicals in samples. Typical samples submitted are biological fluids, such as blood, urine, and vitreous humor, but may also include other liquids, solids, and/or tissues. The majority of submitted samples are associated with motor vehicle offenses, but may also include death investigation cases, drug facilitated sexual assault cases (DFSA), and other crimes that require toxicological examination.

7.2 Evidence Submission

7.2.1 A minimum of 10 mL of blood, serum, or plasma should be submitted for cases requiring comprehensive toxicological analysis. If less than 10 mL of sample is submitted, the Toxicology Unit shall identify and prioritize testing in order to maximize the value of the toxicological analyses but may not be able to complete all of the requested examinations.

7.2.2 The TBI provides user agencies with kits for sample collection. The standard kit contains the following:

- Two (2) 10 mL gray-top glass tubes for blood collection (containing 20 mg potassium oxalate and 100 mg sodium fluoride)
- Packaging/safety material
- Alcohol/Toxicology Request form
- Cardboard box pre-addressed to the TBI Crime Lab

7.2.3 While most evidence is submitted in the provided TBI Blood Alcohol/Toxicology Evidence Collection Kit, other evidence packaging will also be accepted.

7.2.4 It may be necessary to repackage evidence in a more appropriate container if leaking, damaged, etc. Any repackaging or damage will be documented in the case file.

7.3 Evidence Receipt

Evidence shall be received and processed by the Evidence Receiving Unit.



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7.3.1 Receipt of Processed Evidence

7.3.1.1 Processed toxicological evidence may be retrieved from the Evidence Receiving Unit or another unit of the laboratory.

7.3.1.2 All evidence transfers must be recorded in the chain of custody.

7.3.1.3 All evidence transferred into or out of each regional laboratory must be safely packaged with a proper seal. Evidence transferred directly from unit to unit within each facility must be safely packaged with a convenience seal.

7.3.1.4 All evidence and/or packaging must be labeled with a bar coded laboratory case number.

7.4 Evidence Storage

7.4.1 Evidence transfers between individuals and limited-access shared locations require a proper chain of custody recorded in the case file. The storage of evidence in the process of examination is considered temporary and is exempt from this requirement.

7.4.2 All biological and/or perishable specimens should be stored refrigerated at 2°C to 8°C. Tissue should be stored frozen at -23°C to -13°C (see section 6.11 (Refrigerators and Freezers) for additional information).

7.4.3 The evidence will be stored in a long term storage location (i.e., toxicology evidence refrigerators/vault or the Evidence Receiving Unit's vault) until processed/analyzed.

7.4.4 Any nonbiological evidence will be limited to 60 days in a personal storage location. After that time, it must be returned to the laboratory's Evidence Receiving Unit. Biological samples may be stored for longer than 60 days pending analysis.

7.5 Control of Evidence During Examination

7.5.1 Evidence may be stored in a secured, limited-access storage area or locked personal storage location during the process of examination and does not require entry into the chain of custody.

7.5.2 Upon receipt of the evidence, the forensic scientist/technician will verify the documented evidence. The description shall be initialed in the case by all scientists issuing reports.

7.6 Evidence Disposition

7.6.1 Nonbiological evidence will be returned to the Evidence Receiving Unit following testing.

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7.6.2 Biological evidence routinely will be destroyed after testing. This evidence will be held for a minimum of 60 days from the date of the final report. Actual destruction dates may be longer than 60 days, depending upon the storage capacity of the laboratory. The date of transfer into the biohazard waste receptacle will be considered the destruction date and will be recorded in the chain of custody.

7.6.3 Biological evidence shall be stored in a secured, limited-access or a personal storage location until the set destruction date. Evidence will be packaged in order to segregate evidence based on the analyst and the date(s) of analysis. Since each blood tube is labeled with its TBI Laboratory Case Number and barcode, a forensic seal is not required for storage.

7.6.4 Biological evidence may be held/released at customer request (i.e., submitting agency or district attorney) or analyst discretion or held/released at third party request by a court order (see TBI Policy 10-2-010). Either circumstance will be documented in the case file and recorded in the chain of custody.