



**San Diego Police  
Forensic Science Section**



**Latent Print  
Unit Policy Manual**

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Issuing Authority John Simms, Quality Manager

## 1.1 UNIT OVERVIEW

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### DESCRIPTION

The Latent Print Unit is located on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor (room 670) of the San Diego Police Department Headquarters building. The laboratory address is 1401 Broadway, San Diego, CA 92101, Mail Station 725. The hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 0530 hours until 1630 hours.

The Latent Print Unit is composed of two supervisors, a staff of Latent Print Examiners and Latent Print Aides.

### LATENT PRINT UNIT FUNCTIONS

The Latent Print Unit is an integral part of the San Diego Police Department ASCLD- LAB International accredited Crime Laboratory. The unit is charged with the responsibility of examining friction ridge evidence while maintaining evidence integrity.

### SECURITY

The Latent Print Unit door will remain closed and locked during business hours. The unit is considered a secure evidence storage room. Only the electronic card key should be used to unlock the door.

Latent Print Unit personnel will maintain the security of their evidence casework in progress by doing the following:

- 1) When leaving their desk for any reason during the day, they will ensure case evidence left on their desk is not in an area where the evidence can be knocked off or fall into a trash/shred container.
- 2) When on extended absence such as vacation, furlough, medical leave, etc., the case evidence will be packaged in the original envelope(s) and left on their desk for access by the Latent Print Unit supervisors.

## 2.1 INCOMING EVIDENCE

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### A. Policy

Latent Print Unit personnel will retrieve latent print evidence (envelopes and exemplars) from the Property Room. All new evidence must include a barcode.

Information on the envelopes must be accurately documented and reflect the contents within. The barcode label must have the correct incident number, barcode number and quantity of evidence if listed.

### B. Procedure

- 1) Property Room personnel will scan the barcodes indicating that the evidence was released to the Latent Print Unit.
  - a. Latent Print Unit personnel should ensure that the evidence is properly sealed. If the evidence is not sealed, Property Room personnel will seal the evidence.
  - b. Upon returning to the unit, Latent Print Unit personnel will scan the barcodes indicating that the evidence was received into the unit.
  - c. Latent Print Unit personnel will date and initial the envelope. An additional date will be required if the evidence is not assigned the date it is received.
  - d. Latent Print Unit personnel will scan the evidence to the individual examiners.
  - e. There may be circumstances where the evidence is brought into the Latent Print Unit (i.e. urgent nature, after hours, etc.). Under these circumstances, a barcode and envelope will be created in the Latent Print Unit by the requesting officer for the integrity of Chain of Custody. When possible, all envelopes should be received through the Property Room.
- 2) Evidence received with a property tag (i.e. without a barcode) will be handled as follows:
  - a. Latent Print Unit personnel will sign the Property Room check-out log and the back of the property tag to receive the evidence.

3) Evidence with incomplete and/or incorrect documentation will be handled as follows:

a. Upon receipt, the contents of any envelope submitted will be confirmed and referred to as an item. Latent print cards with hinge lifters that are received securely attached on top of one another (i.e., taped or stapled), will be considered one card/item.

b. If any item needs to be repackaged (i.e., officer used wrong envelope, barcode was placed over case information or if the barcode was used as a seal), the original container will be kept inside the new envelope and the case information will be written on the new envelope.

c. If any of the following are incorrectly documented on the envelope, Latent Print Unit personnel will correct if possible.

- i. Name of victim
- ii. Case number
- iii. Incident number
- iv. Contents (i.e. number of cards, elimination exemplars, Cops/photos)

d. At the beginning of examination, ensure that the latent lifts have the required documentation. At a minimum, the latent lifts should have the name of the lifting officer, the date of recovery and the location from which the lifts were taken. When the latent lifts do not meet the minimum required, are blank, or have insufficient information to complete the case, the officer will be notified and required to come to the unit to complete the documentation.

e. The examiner should ensure the correct case number and/or incident number is documented on each item. This can be verified using the Criminal Records Management System (CRMS) database.

f. If the case number or incident number is incorrect on the latent lifts, Latent Print Unit personnel will correct if possible.

g. If the evidence is missing the case number only, the examiner can write in the case number but must also add the barcode.

h. For non-latent print evidence (i.e., shoe impression lifts, fabric impression evidence, biological fluids, etc.), both the officer and the supervisor of the appropriate section will be notified by a Latent Print Unit supervisor.

## 2.2 LATENT PRINT EXAMINATION REQUESTS

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### A. Policy

A Latent Print Unit Request Form (PD-299) is needed for a manual comparison to a subject. Refer to the Work Requests section of the Quality Assurance (QA) Manual for exceptions to this policy.

Evidence from Harbor Police or any other outside agency must have upper administration approval for the work to be done. If so, it will be issued a San Diego Police Department incident number.

Cases assigned proactively do not require a request.

Any cases that are not assigned proactively or require priority rush work to begin must be approved by a Latent Print Unit supervisor.

The supervisor or personnel serving an Out of Class Assignment (OCA) will prioritize and assign all requests.

### B. Procedure

- 1) Requests are normally received and processed through the Clerical Unit.
- 2) All work requests will be reviewed by either a Latent Print Unit supervisor or an OCA, initialed and dated.

## 2.3 CASE MANAGEMENT COVER SHEET

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### A. Policy

The Cover Sheet is used by Latent Print Unit personnel to gather statistical data.

### B. Procedure

- 1) Complete the case coversheet with the following guidelines in mind:
  - a. Case or incident number.
  - b. Crime Type – Property or Person.
  - c. Case Type – Proactive (no PD-299), ALPS (ALPS search requested on PD-299), Manual (Latent Print Comparison requested on PD 299), or Tenprint-to-Latent Inquiry (TLI) (no PD-299).
  - d. Date completed (report date).
  - e. Prints of value remaining – Yes or no.
  - f. Examiner.
  - g. Evidence analyzed – total number of cards/images/scans/etc.
  - h. ALPS – total number of ALPS searches including datasets.
  - i. Manual – total number of manual examinations including elimination comparisons and known to known comparisons.
  - j. Total- sum of g through i.
  - k. TR/Verifications- Number of examinations for identifications, exclusions and known to known comparisons.
  - l. Information on subjects identified including the name and unique identifier.
  - m. Information on the lifting officer, detective or crime scene specialist to include name and ID number for the ALPS awards program.
- 2) The coversheet is reviewed during technical review.
- 3) The coversheet will be retained by the supervisor after administrative review.

## 2.4 EVIDENCE HANDLING FOR COURT AND RELEASING EVIDENCE

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### A. Policy

When an examiner is summonsed to court, they may obtain any relevant evidence pertaining to the case from the Property Room. The evidence will be scanned to the examiner (or the property tag will be signed for older cases) for Chain of Custody purposes and will remain in the examiner's custody until their court hearing is completed. Any suspect, victim, officer, detective, district attorney etc. who requests the release of original evidence and/or known exemplars (i.e. for court or outside examination) must go through the Property Room.

### B. Procedure

#### 1) Court

a. When the court retains any evidence, the following documentation is required:

1. A Court Evidence Receipt (PD-233) form must be completed for property tag evidence. It must be signed and stamped by the court clerk to verify custody of evidence. The original (white) will be given to the Property Room while the copy is placed into the case file as an administrative document.
2. A FileOnQ Court Evidence Receipt must be generated for barcoded evidence. The FOQ court receipt print-out will be placed into the case file as an administrative document.

## 2.5 OUTSIDE EXPERTS

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### A. Policy

Prior to an in-house examination by an outside expert in the Latent Print Unit, a Latent Print supervisor and the Crime Laboratory Manager must give approval (see QA Manual regarding 'outside experts in the lab'). Copies of the latent print evidence can be provided upon request or it can be viewed upon appointment. The appropriate chain of custody will be completed.

### B. Procedure

#### 1) In-house examination

a. A court order or the authorization by the assigned prosecutor to make available the original evidence for an in-house examination will require the completion of the following steps:

1. The examiner will perform an inventory of the evidence prior to viewing.
2. An internal chain of custody entry, completed by the examiner and outside expert, is sufficient documentation for receiving and transferring of the evidence. The existing chain of custody in the note packet can be used or a new chain of custody can be added to the note packet.
3. The evidence must also be inventoried by the examiner at the completion of the exam in the presence of the outside expert.
4. The examiner receiving the evidence being returned will document receipt on the chain of custody.
5. Upon completion of the external examination, the chain of custody and any additional note pages must go through technical review and an administrative review.