



Intermountain Forensics

SOP #

ADM-122

Revision #

01

Forensic DNA Technical Leader Approval

Issue Date

03/01/2023

Handling of Test Items – Salt Lake City (IMF-SLC)

1. Purpose

This document describes the policy for the transportation, receipt, handling, storage, retention, disposal, and protection of the integrity of test items for the Intermountain Forensics – Salt Lake City (IMF-SLC) laboratory.

2. Summary

The transportation, receipt, handling, protection, storage, retention, disposal and return of test items of IMF-SLC are designed to include all provisions necessary to protect the integrity of the test items, and to protect the interests of the laboratory and the customer using tracking mechanisms and defined procedures. This document contains the overall policy of the laboratory and reference to procedures for the use the Laboratory Information Management System (LIMS), JusticeTrax®.

3. Procedure

1. IMF-SLC has procedures for the transportation, receipt, handling, storage, retention, disposal, and protection of the integrity of test items which address evidence while in the custody of the laboratory. In addition, ADM-121 Evidence Submission Guidelines has recommendations to customers for the transportation, handling, and protection of the integrity of test items prior to receipt into the laboratory.
2. It is the responsibility of IMF-SLC employees to handle test items in a manner that prevents loss, cross transfer, contamination, or deleterious change. Actions resulting in loss, cross transfer, contamination, or deleterious change may result in removal of the individual from handling of test items until appropriate corrective action can be taken.
3. Items at the Time of Receipt and Initial Storage
 - a. Evidence Receipt Procedures are documented in EVD-200 Evidence Receiving.
 - b. Following submission, test items are stored in secure, limited-access, environmentally controlled areas within the IMF-SLC facility.
 - c. Evidence stored by IMF-SLC is packaged and sealed in a manner to protect it from loss, cross transfer, contamination, or deleterious change.
 - i. If an item is received unsealed, a seal and the initials and date of sealing are applied by an IMF-SLC employee.
 - ii. When evidence cannot be packaged and sealed (due to size or some other obstacle to appropriate packaging), the integrity of the item (or area on the item that examination is requested) must be protected. In those instances, storage conditions/area must be considered for items that cannot be sealed to appropriately protect the evidence from loss, cross transfer, contamination, or deleterious change.
 - d. In the rare instances evidence is collected by an IMF-SLC employee from a location other than the laboratory, the item shall be sealed or stored in a manner to protect it from loss, cross transfer, contamination, or deleterious change in accordance with the guidelines outlined in ADM-121 Evidence Submission Guidelines.
 - e. A copy of the receipt bearing the case number, item number, and item description can be generated from JusticeTrax® and provided at the request of the customer.



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4. Items in the Process of Examination and Unattended Items
 - a. Items currently in the process of examination must remain in a limited-access area. Testing areas are considered limited-access areas.
 - b. Where the chain of custody record reflects a specific individual, the security of the item(s) must always be under the control of the identified individual.
 - i. When temporarily left unattended (e.g., when an analyst takes a break), the item(s) must be secured appropriately to protect its integrity.
 - c. If an analysis will exceed a time frame of 6 months, the reasoning will be documented in the case record (case notes, LIMS narrative, etc.). It should be noted that this time frame refers to the time in which a scientist is in possession of opened case evidence items. It is not reflective of the date a report is issued on the analysis of evidence or storage of evidence before and after examination.
5. Storage and Tracking of Test Items
 - a. While in the custody of IMF-SLC, test items will be stored in a location suitable for the evidence type.
 - i. Frozen:
 1. Urine
 2. Wet Bloody Items
 3. Feces
 4. DNA Extracts
 - ii. Refrigerated:
 1. Liquid Blood
 2. Wet Swabs (if they cannot be air dried – though air dried is highly recommended)
 - iii. Temperature Controlled
 1. Dry Biological Stained Items
 2. Hair
 3. Dried Swabs with Biological Material
 4. Buccal Swabs
 - b. Evidence Tracking
 - i. Upon submission, a test item will be assigned a unique number in JusticeTrax® associated with the appropriate Laboratory case number.
 1. The Laboratory case number and unique item number will be used to track the evidence and will identify evidence item(s) unambiguously in reports.
 2. All items received by IMF-SLC will be entered into JusticeTrax®, regardless of whether those items will be tested or not.
 3. Refer to ADM-200 Evidence Receiving for the procedure on evidence receiving
6. Chain of Custody
 - a. Chain of custody will be recorded in a chronological order from receipt to final disposition.
 - b. When test items are subdivided and/or items are created and used or could be used for testing, those sub-items must be tracked through a documented chain of custody record to the same extent that original test items are tracked. This may require sub-items to be individually identified and tracked.
 - i. Work product that is retained/preserved without the implicit purpose for future testing does not require tracking in LIMS. (i.e., RT-PCR product, amplified product)



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- c. When a test item will be consumed by analysis, the work product might be required to be tracked in the same manner as a test item.
 - d. When a discrepancy is found where there is an omission of or erroneous addition of custody location(s) for any item, a narrative will be entered into the Synopsis field for the case in JusticeTrax® explaining the discrepancy and detailing the custody that is not reflected in the electronic record.
- 7. Disposition of Evidence
 - a. It is the policy of IMF-SLC to return all test items and associated work product not consumed during analysis.
 - i. Refer to EVD-205 Evidence Return for the procedure for the return of evidence to the customer.
- 8. Test Item Discrepancy
 - a. At the time of receipt and/or examination, it may be identified that the items received do not reflect the submission receipt and/or item description on the packaging specified by the submitting agency.
 - b. DOC-326 Test Item Discrepancy form will be used to document observed discrepancy.
 - i. If the discrepancy is observed at the time of receipt, then the form will be provided to the customer as an attachment associated with the discrepant item of evidence in the attachments tab of JusticeTrax®.
 - ii. If the discrepancy is observed at the time of examination, the form will be included as a part of the support documentation included with all reports.
 - c. It might be necessary to contact the customer to discuss the discrepancy prior to proceeding with examination/analysis. Documentation of any communications regarding the discrepancy will be maintained in the case record.
 - i. If communication with the customer is required, then the Director of Laboratory Operations must be notified of the discrepancy prior to initiation of the communication.
- 9. Evidence Storage Inventory
 - a. The long-term evidence storage locations will be inventoried at least annually, to ensure the electronic chain of custody accurately reflects the items of evidence stored at IMF for that time period.
 - i. The inventory may be done on a rolling basis throughout the year, to mitigate impact on casework.
 - ii. Discrepancies in the evidence storage inventory will be corrected using the Chain of custody discrepancy procedure outlined above. The DNA Technical Leader will be notified of all discrepancies immediately, prior to correction being performed.
 - 1. The Corrective Action process may be implemented based on the nature and scope of observed discrepancies.

4. References

The Biological Evidence Preservation Handbook: Best Practices for Evidence Handlers. NISTIR7892.

5. Definitions

None