



The Lab Report

Volume 2, Issue 1

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In This Issue....

Welcome to the inaugural 2012 issue of the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory's quarterly newsletter, The Lab Report! In this issue, we will be featuring information on two additional forensic services offered free of charge to submitting agencies by the Nebraska State Patrol - the Computer Crimes Lab and Forensic Video and Audio Analysis/Clarification. Included are tips for the proper submission of possibly one of the most overlooked types of evidence found at a crime scene - footwear/tire impression evidence. We will discuss the collection of legible fingerprints for analysis (both rolled and Livescan collection). In addition, you will find tips on packaging biohazardous items, current laboratory backlog numbers, and a spotlight on one of our laboratory analysts!

If you have any questions/concerns regarding the topics related to this issue (or any other issue) of The Lab Report, please do not hesitate to contact us (laboratory staff contact information - pg. 15).

Enjoy!

Amy Weber (Firearm/Tool Mark Section Analyst - editor, The Lab Report)

The Backlog Corner

Biology Unit: 202 assignments (approx. 6-8 month turnaround time)

Physical Sciences Unit:

Firearm/Toolmark cases: 45 assignments (approx. 6 month turnaround time)

NIBIN: 106 assignments (approx. 6 month turnaround time)

Latent Fingerprints Section: 53 assignments (approx. 3 week turnaround time)

Chemistry Unit:

Controlled Substances: 677 assignments (approx. 10 week turnaround time)

Toxicology: 42 assignments (approx. 8 week turnaround time)

Trace: 11 assignments (approx. 12 week turnaround time)



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Nebraska State Patrol Computer Crimes Lab

The Nebraska State Patrol Computer Crimes Lab conducts forensic examinations of computer systems and other electronic media (including cell phones and mobile devices) for the Nebraska State Patrol, allied law enforcement agencies, and the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force. Types of cases submitted for examination by the lab's computer forensic analysts include, but are not limited to: the sexual exploitation of children, fraud, forgery, theft, homicide, and drug violations.

During 2011, the Computer Crimes Lab received evidence for 65 investigations, and examined 100 pieces of evidence for 35 investigations.

The Computer Crimes Lab is located at 3800 N.W. 12th Street in Lincoln, NE and is currently staffed by three Computer Forensic Analysts: Brian Meyer (since September 2008), Shelby Mertins (since May 2011), and Terry Olson (since September 2011).

Computer Crimes Lab

Analysts

Eric Jones (Sgt.)

Angela Bell

Brian Meyer

Shelby Mertins

Terry Olson

In addition to the Computer Forensic Analysts, the Computer Crime Lab is staffed by one Crime Analyst, Angela Bell, who has been with the lab since May 2010. She supports ICAC investigations through analytical products, gathers and disseminates Cyber-Tips that are received from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), prepares intelligence bulletins, and examines cell phones and other mobile devices.

If you are interested in submitting evidence to the Computer Crimes Lab or would like an analytical product, please contact Sgt. Eric Jones , by phone at 402-479-4080 or email eric.jones@nebraska.gov for more information.



Forensic Video and Audio Analysis/Clarification

In addition to the various forensic processes available at the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory, the agency also provides Forensic Video and Audio Analysis/Clarification.

Surveillance video can be analyzed and sometimes enhanced to provide information and/or clarified images. Since 2002, the Nebraska State Patrol has been able to perform video clarification techniques such as frame averaging, demultiplexing (separating footage from multiple camera views), stabilizing shaky video, convert time-lapsed video to real-time, comparative analysis, etc. Also provided is limited audio enhancement (i.e. removing undesirable noise from a particular frequency, such as an electronic hum or a wind noise).

In the past, video surveillance systems were primarily analog (videotape-based) but most cases we handle currently are digital.

The increased use of digital surveillance systems has created unique, and often frustrating, challenges for investigators and video analysts. Recovery of digital video can be very difficult, often requiring seizure of the DVR (Digital Video Recorder), hard drive, or the entire computer system in order for the Forensic Video Analyst to retrieve and process the evidence.

Due to variations in recording technologies, system interfaces, compression schemes, and security features, many times even just viewing a recorded incident recorded on a digital system can be a challenge. In addition, there are currently no standards governing the design, installation, operation, or performance of digital video security systems.

Despite the aforementioned challenges, the Nebraska State Patrol Forensic Video Laboratory is capable of recovering footage and images from most digital systems.

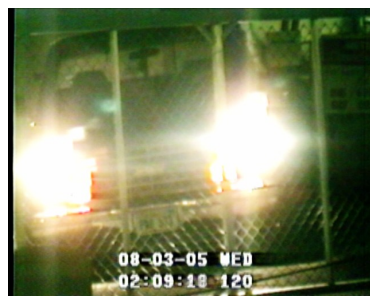
If you have questions, or need to submit surveillance video for recovery/analysis/clarification, please contact Mike Meyer at Nebraska State Patrol Headquarters, 1600 Hwy 2, Lincoln, NE 68502, 402-479-3501, or at mike.meyer@nebraska.gov.



Original Images



Clarified Images



Multiplex image (before)



Multiplex image (after)



Footwear/Tire
Impression
Analysts

Kent Weber (sup.)

Amy Weber

Sarah Zarnick

Submission of Footwear/Tire Impression Evidence

General Rules for Handling Footwear/Tire Evidence:

- ◆ Submit all footwear/tire impression evidence to the lab (e.g. photos of impressions, casts, lifts, suspect shoes/tires).
- ◆ Protect fragile evidence (e.g. wrap casts with bubble wrap, ensure that items possessing impressions are protected from damage and movement, etc).
- ◆ Label photographs to make it clear which impression from the scene is depicted.
- ◆ As many casts/lifts/impression mediums should be recovered as supplies allow in order to maximize the amount of probative evidence available for analysis.
- ◆ All suspect shoes/tires with a tread pattern resembling evidence impressions should be submitted.
- ◆ **DON'T SCREEN** - It is imperative that we are provided all footwear/tire impression evidence that is recovered from a scene. Screening may result in omission of critical evidence or assigning too much associative value to similar items that possess hard to notice differences in class characteristics!

Footwear/Tire Impression Photography:

- ◆ Take **multiple photographs** of an impression before any further collection or enhancement efforts. Submit **all photographs exhibiting impressions** to the Crime Lab. If other collection efforts are unsuccessful, impression photos may be the only examination medium available.
- ◆ **Don't use** overhead lighting. Oblique lighting provides the contrast and detail needed for comparative analysis. Different characteristics in the impression will be emphasized with light from different directions and low-angle heights.



Same impression with overhead lighting vs. oblique lighting.

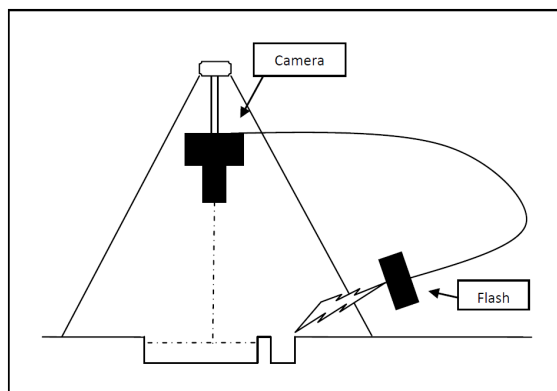
Submission of Footwear/Tire Impression Evidence

Footwear/Tire Impression Photography (cont.):

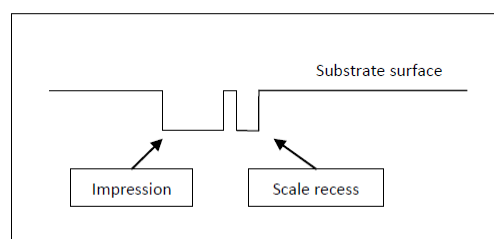
- ◆ **Provide a description (photo log)** with each photograph so laboratory analysts are able to quickly group photos with the appropriate impression evidence.
- ◆ **Photographs of tire impressions:** photographs should be overlapping due to the length of these types of impressions. Make your best attempt to capture at least 6-8 feet of the impression for comparison purposes.

Photography Equipment List:

- ◆ **Digital camera** (be familiar with how to adjust your settings – image types, F-Stop, shutter speeds, etc). Use high quality image settings.
- ◆ **Tripod** or other means of orienting camera lens so it is **perpendicular** to the impression and **stable** (to avoid blurriness/loss of detail).
- ◆ **Proper scale (No Pens, Money, Paper Clips, Sticks, etc)**. The scale/ruler needs to be placed in the same plane as the bottom of the impression (you may need to dig a shallow recess for the scale, especially in snow, sand, mud, etc. – see depiction below).
- ◆ **Electronic Flash** (or flashlight) to be able to create lighting contrast in your photographs.



Camera + flash setup



Scale placement - 3D impressions





Submission of Footwear/Tire Impression Evidence

Lifts:

- ◆ Different types of lifts: Gel, Adhesive, Electrostatic.
- ◆ Gel and adhesive lifts work for most dust/residue scenarios. However, electrostatic lifts are preferred when impressions are on drywall or another paper-backed surface.
- ◆ Residue impressions on kicked in doors, walls, etc. may be enhanced with the use of contrasting fingerprint powders, then lifted with adhesive or gel lifts.
- ◆ **Label all lifts and cross-reference lifts to photographs of the impression the lift represents.**
- ◆ **Packaging Concerns:** Ensure that lifts are secured to the packaging or protected in some way so as to avoid damage during handling/transport. Electrostatic lifts are very fragile and have to be protected from contact or friction with other objects, as well as sources of additional dust/debris.



Casts:

- ◆ Allow casts to **fully dry** prior to transport to the lab (debris adhering to the casts does not need to be cleaned off in the field – lab analysts will clean casts).
- ◆ **Label all casts and cross-reference casts to photographs and/or lifts of the impression that the cast represents.**
- ◆ **Casts of tire impressions:** casts should be overlapping and labeled in sequential order due to the length of these types of impressions. All attempts should be made to capture at least 6-8 feet of the impression for comparison purposes.
- ◆ **Packaging Concerns:** Ensure casts are **well-protected** (bubble wrap, crumpled paper, etc.) to avoid damage or breakage.



Submission of Footwear/Tire Impression Evidence

Suspect Shoes/Tires:

- ◆ All suspect shoes with a tread pattern resembling evidence impressions should be submitted. There are often subtle differences between shoes with similar tread patterns that are not always obvious to crime scene personnel. Pattern overlap may account for some evidence discrepancies that can be misunderstood as a different tread pattern altogether.
- ◆ Include the date of shoe/tire recovery on the laboratory submittal form.



Similar tread patterns in three shoes of different brands.

Useful Footwear/Tire References for Impression Evidence Collection:

[Bodziak, W.J., Footwear Impression Evidence: Detection, Recovery, and Examination, Second Edition.](#)

[Bodziak, W.J., Tire Tread and Tire Track Evidence: Recovery and Forensic Examination, First Edition.](#)

Website: Crime Scene Investigator Network www.crime-scene-investigator.net

For additional, footwear/tire impression evidence submission questions and/or concerns, please contact the footwear/tire impression evidence analysts: Kent Weber (section supervisor), Amy Weber, or Sarah Zarnick.





Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Collecting legible fingerprints and palm prints for comparison purposes is extremely important for the success of identifying latent impressions, which often contain minimal ridge detail. A latent impression on average contains only about 20% of the friction ridge detail found in a fully rolled impression. The quality of known impressions submitted by officers to populate the Nebraska AFIS database greatly impacts the ability of examiners to make comparisons resulting in identifications and investigative leads. Meaning: ***Better impressions going in, better results coming out.***

Fingerprint Collection Methods

Fingerprint impressions can be captured using a standard fingerprint card (FD-249 and FD-258) either by ink or by Livescan. If you are capturing the prints on a Livescan, do not print out the card to submit. This degrades the quality of the impressions and may make them unsuitable for comparison purposes. Please submit all Livescan impressions electronically.

To begin fingerprinting, make sure that the friction ridge skin to be captured is clean, the fingerprint card is filled out with all of the known data (i.e. name, date of birth, height, weight, eye color, hair color, etc.) and that the cards are signed by both the person rolling the fingerprints and the person having their prints rolled. The information on the fingerprint card is needed for entry into the Nebraska AFIS database. On a Livescan, you will be prompted to enter in the necessary data and to collect the digital signature on the Livescan signature pad.

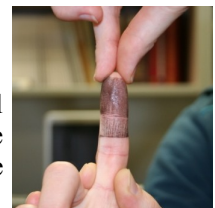
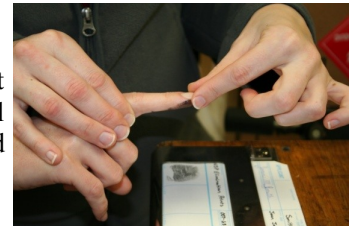
Latent Fingerprint Section

Mariana Ward (sup.)

Steve Burke

Bridget Driver

- ◆ Stand with the person to be rolled on your right.
- ◆ When rolling, hold the individual's thumb or finger at the base of the knuckle with your right hand. Control the tip of the thumb or finger with your left thumb and index finger (in a light pinching motion).
- ◆ If needed, ask the individual to look away and relax. Many people will try to assist in rolling which may cause the prints to smudge.
- ◆ Roll the finger on the inking plate or pad from nail to nail (from one edge of the nail across the pad of the finger to the other side of the nail) and from just below the crease of the first joint to the tip of the finger.
- ◆ Due to the natural movements of the forearm, the hand should be rotated from the more difficult position to the easiest position (uncomfortable to comfortable). When rolling the thumbs, they should be rolled toward the center of the individual's body. When rolling the fingers, they should be rolled away from the center of the individual's body (as seen in the sequence of photos below).



Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Fingerprint Collection Methods (continued)

The rolling motion is the same for rolling the finger in the ink, rolling the inked finger onto the card, and rolling the finger on the Livescan.

When using the ink and paper method, if a rolled impression is not acceptable, you may use an adhesive retab to cover the fingerprint in its space. It is preferable to roll the impression on the retab prior to placing the retab on the fingerprint card. This ensures that the best impression for that finger can be selected and then placed in the appropriate location on the fingerprint card. For impressions captured using the Livescan, the image should be deleted and re-taken.

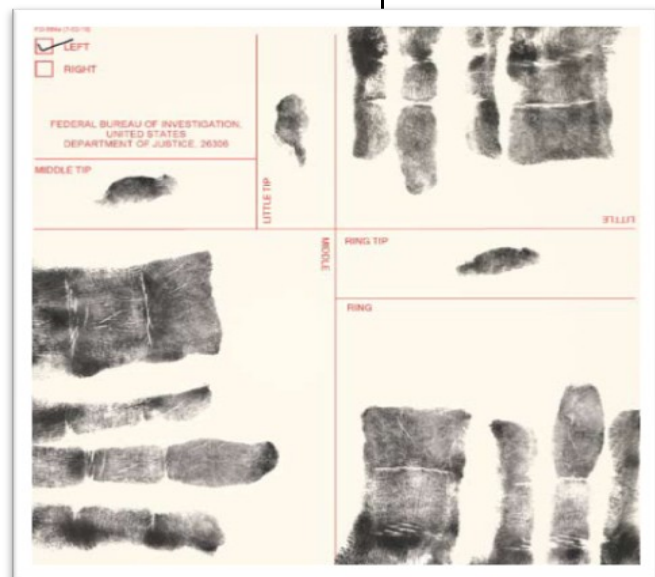


Obtaining Major Case Prints

In some instances, traditional tenprint cards or Livescan submissions will not contain the friction ridge information needed for comparison purposes. In these cases you may be requested to obtain Major Case Prints. Major Case Prints allow for the capture of all areas of the friction ridge skin on the fingers. To capture Major Case Prints (also known as supplemental prints), impressions must be captured in the following sequence: fully rolled, left edge, flat, and right edge.

When capturing the impressions, the tip of the finger must be oriented in the same direction of the text within the capture block. The fingers will be placed as high as possible onto the card to try and obtain all of the friction ridge detail, including the detail at the base of the finger.

To capture the ball of the palm (Thenar area or thumb side of the palm), orient the ball of palm in the direction of text within the capture block with base of wrist in line with edge of card. Be sure that the appropriate label for each hand is marked. There should be one Major Case Print card per hand. At this time major case prints are not able to be entered into the Nebraska AFIS. See examples of the front and back of the Major Case Prints fingerprint card below.





Example of Wet Prints (Ink Rolled)

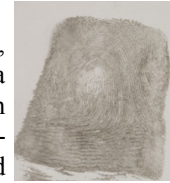
Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Printing Issues

There are many causes of unsatisfactory fingerprint and palm print impressions. Most of them are easily remedied. Below are some examples of the common issues with received impressions and ways to make sure that you get the best possible set of exemplar impressions.

Perspiration/Wet Prints

In the case of ink rolled prints, if there is moisture on the hands, the friction ridge detail will not get inked properly resulting in a “watercolor effect”. With a Livescan impression, the friction ridge detail will appear extremely dark and in some cases obscured completely (it looks very similar to an impression rolled with too much pressure).



Ink Rolled



Livescan

If hands are moist, the best method is to wipe each finger with a paper towel just before rolling either in the ink pad or on the Livescan. An alternative is to use an alcohol wipe to remove the excess perspiration.

Dry Hands

For ink rolled prints, if the skin of the hand is too dry, the friction ridge detail will not ink properly resulting in the ridge detail appearing faint and broken. Livescan impressions will have the same result as using ink in that the detail will be faint and broken if the hands are too dry.



Ink Rolled



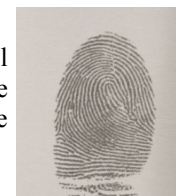
Livescan

If hands are dry, the best method for ink is to use a little lotion rubbed into each finger (if rolling palm prints be sure to also apply lotion to the entire surface of the palms). Be sure to wipe off any excess lotion as it could ruin the ink pad if it transfers from the hands.

On a Livescan it is not advisable to use lotion as it could ruin the glass rolling plate (pattan). The best method for rolling impressions on a Livescan is to use a baby wipe on the fingers or palms prior to rolling. Another option is to have the individual wash their hands in warm water (without soap, it could be drying) for a few minutes just prior to rolling the impressions.

Not Fully Rolled

If the impression is not fully rolled, the friction ridge detail that is needed may not be captured (i.e. delta areas). Be sure to roll from nail to nail and from just below the crease of the first joint to the tip of the finger.



Not fully rolled



Fully rolled

For ink rolled, if the first impression that was captured was not fully rolled, re-roll the finger on a retab, select the best impression (if multiple attempts were made) and affix it to the correct location on the fingerprint card.

For a Livescan image, delete the image and re-roll.

Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Slippage or Smudging While Rolling

If the finger slips or slides across the fingerprint card or Livescan glass, it could create smudges and areas of severe distortion through the impression. Hold the individual's thumb or finger at the base of the knuckle with your right hand and control the tip of the thumb or finger with your left thumb and index finger. Also, have the individual look away and be sure to take into account the natural movements of the forearm when rolling.



Ink Rolled



Livescan



Example of Slippage on Livescan

If needed, use re-tabs to select the best impression. For a Livescan image, delete the image and re-roll.

Creases



If the individual has a lot of creases in their skin it may be difficult to capture sufficient friction ridge detail.

For ink rolled impressions, use lotion and rub it in to the fingers. Rubbing lotion into the fingertips also helps to increase the blood flow to the tips of the fingers. Increasing the blood flow will help to plump up the ridges while the lotions helps to even out the creases. Be sure to wipe off any excess lotion prior to rolling the finger on the ink pad. If needed, use re-tabs to select the best impression.

For Livescan image, have the individual wash their hands in warm water for a few minutes. After the hands are dried off, rub the fingertips to help increase the blood flow and proceed with rolling the impressions. If needed, delete any unsatisfactory impressions and re-roll.

Too Much Pressure

When rolling impressions be sure to use only the weight of the finger for pressure. Friction ridge skin is very stretchy and will flatten out if too much pressure is applied causing different issues for ink rolled impressions and Livescan impressions.

When rolling fingerprints in ink, too much pressure can cause the impression to actually invert (the ridges look gray and the furrows look black). The pressure pushes the ink off the ridges and transfers it to the furrows when the print is rolled. If needed, use re-tabs to select the best impression.



Figure 1

The print in Figure 1 was taken using ink with too much pressure. The friction ridge detail is inverted in the center portion of the print where the pressure was the greatest. The impression shown in Figure 2, is how the friction ridge detail should look when the fingerprint is rolled.



Figure 2

The last picture above shows an impression taken on the Livescan. The ridges have become flattened and wide, in some areas almost completely closing off the furrows. It also causes the print to be very dark and some of the detail obscured. If needed, delete any unsatisfactory impressions and re-roll.



Example of Livescan impression using too much pressure



Example of Livescan Issue:
uneven pressure and distortion in upper right side.

Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Printing Issues (continued)

Inking Issues

Too much ink, too little ink, or uneven inking will cause issues with the friction ridge detail being clearly represented.

If you have a new ink pad you may have issues with too much ink. To help remove some of the excess ink after inking, you can roll the impression on one card and then another card without re-inking the finger in between. If needed, use re-tabs and select the best impression.

If you have an older, dried out ink pad you may have issues with too little ink. It is not advisable to roll the finger back and forth multiple times over the ink pad. Occasionally, using lotion on the individual's fingers may help. However, it will not help if the individual has sufficiently moist skin already. In some cases a new ink pad is the only way to remedy this issue.



Too Much Ink



Too Little Ink

Livescan Issues

Occasionally, when capturing fingerprint impressions on a Livescan, there may be areas of distortion. Some distortion is more obvious than others. Quite often, it is an area located in the upper portion of the impression due to slippage while rolling.



If you see any distortion in the image after rolling an impression on the Livescan, delete the image and re-roll. Any areas of distortion, large or small, will interfere with the examiner's ability to make a complete comparison using that impression. If you continue to see distortion in any of the impressions (rolled or plain impressions), please contact your Livescan/AFIS Administrator and report the issue as it may be an issue with the Livescan itself.

Bandaged and Missing Fingers

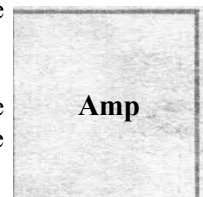
Do not roll bandaged fingers. Indicate on the card that the finger was bandaged and was not able to be printed at that time.

When rolling fingerprints for someone that has an amputation, be sure to indicate whether it is a "Tip Amp" or an "Amp". The label "tip amp" is used when there is friction ridge detail above the first joint, but the tip is gone. Roll the impression as normal, but write "Tip Amp" in that box above the print and in the plain impression area by the corresponding finger.

If an individual has no friction ridge detail above the first joint, do not roll the finger and write "Amp" in the box and in the plain impression area by where the corresponding finger would be.



Tip Amp



Amp

Collecting Legible Fingerprint Impressions

Additional Information

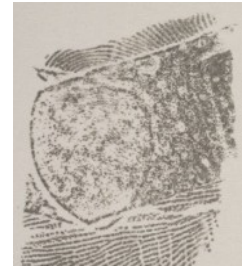
Fingerprint, palm print and major case print cards can be obtained from the FBI at no charge. Contact the Fingerprint Supply Center at 304-625-3983 or visit their website: www.fbi.gov/hq/cjisd/forms/orderingfps.htm

Standard Fingerprint card: Criminal Fingerprint card: FD-249
Applicant Fingerprint card: FD-258

Palm Print card: FD-884 (7-02-10)

Major Case Print card: FD-884a (7-02-10)

If you have any questions regarding the capture or submission of exemplar prints, please feel free to contact the NSP Crime Lab Latent Print section.



Bandaged Finger

Spotlight on Forensics - Brandy Porter (Biology Unit)



Name: Brandy Porter

Hometown: Colorado Springs, CO

Education: B.S. Biology (Nebraska Wesleyan Univ.)
M.F.S. Forensic Science with an emphasis in
Biology/Chemistry (Nebraska Wesleyan Univ.)

Work Experience:

El Paso County Coroner's Office (Intern), Colorado Springs, CO (May 2008)

GeneSeek (Laboratory Technician), Lincoln, NE (February 2008-October 2009)

Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory (Forensic Scientist), Lincoln, NE (November 2009-Present)

Hobbies: I spend most of my time dancing, attending sporting events, traveling, bike riding, fishing, and playing my accordion (yes-the instrument Steve Erkle played) in the lab band (Toxic Polka). I am very close with my family so I make frequent trips back home to visit my parents, brother, and two nieces.

Contact Information: Email: Brandy.Porter@nebraska.gov Phone: 402-471-8870





Tips on Evidence - Packaging Potentially Biohazardous Items

Remember to take extra precautions when submitting evidence items for examinations that are, or potentially are, contaminated with biohazardous materials (blood, tissue, other fluids). **Be cognizant and label ALL packaging with biohazard warning stickers!** It is not always clear by the submittal form narrative or listed offense whether or not the items submitted are contaminated. Proper labeling ensures an extra level of safety for everyone who might handle the package.

For example, when submitting a bloody firearm for analysis, in addition to the external box/package, it is suggested that the firearm be packaged in a separately sealed internal package to prevent contamination of the external container. If the use of internal packaging is not an option, make sure that all sides of the box/bag are sealed with tape. If a gun box with zip tie holes on the bottom of the container is being used, seal the bottom holes with packing tape.



Incorrect packaging: unsealed holes in bottom of external evidence box.



Proper use of internal, sealed/labeled packaging of contaminated items.



Correct packaging: unsealed holes in bottom of external evidence box covered with packing tape.



Examples of Biohazard Labels



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Pam Zilly

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