

The Lab Report

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Volume 1, Issue 2

July 2011

In This Issue....

Welcome to the second issue of the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Laboratory's Quarterly newsletter! This issue will feature information with regard to the various databases currently being used in the laboratory: CODIS (DNA), NIBIN (firearms), and AFIS (latent fingerprints). We will be discussing laboratory database usage, proper evidence submission for entry into the databases, and other relevant casework information concerning the databases. Also included in this issue will be current laboratory backlog numbers, general evidence submission/handling tips, and a spotlight on one of our forensic analysts! In addition, we would like to welcome two new staff members to our laboratory: Scott Lanagan (Physical Sciences Unit Manager) and Hillary Duin (Lab Technician II).

If you have any questions/concerns regarding the topics related to this issue of <u>The Lab Report</u>, please do not hesitate to contact us (laboratory staff contact information - pg. 18).

Enjoy!

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

The Backlog Corner

Biology Unit: 131 assignments (approx. 4 month turnaround time)

Firearm/Toolmark Section:

Firearm/Toolmark cases: 39 assignments (approx. 6 month turnaround time)

NIBIN: 141 assignments (approx. 12 month turnaround time)

Latent Fingerprints Section: 53 assignments (approx. 2 month turnaround time)

Chemistry Unit:

Controlled Substances: 344 assignments (approx. 5-8 week turnaround time)

Toxicology: 33 assignments (approx. 4 weeks turnaround time)

Trace: 9 assignments (approx. 3-4 weeks turnaround time)



ASCLD/LAB accredited since 2004.

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What is CODIS?

CODIS stands for the Combined DNA Index System. It is a database of DNA profiles that are searched against each other to identify any potential matches that can be used to aid an investigation.

There are three levels to CODIS, the National DNA Index system (NDIS), the State DNA Index System (SDIS) and the Local DNA Index System (LDIS). Since the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab is the only CODIS participating laboratory in Nebraska, it is both LDIS and SDIS. At the SDIS level, the casework samples and the state offender samples are searched against each other. At the NDIS level, states are able to search their eligible offender and casework profiles against other states' profiles.

More CODIS information can be found on the FBI's website at:

http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/lab/codis

Biology Unit Analysts Jason Linder Melissa Kreikemeier Heidi Young Brandy Porter

Katie Rector

CODIS Staff

Katie Rector (state

CODIS administrator)

Hillary Duin (tech)

Offender Samples

The Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab provides Offender Collection Kits at no cost to all participating law enforcement agencies. Please contact the Databank Unit to obtain more kits at 402-471-8950. Training on how to use the Offender Collection Kits can be found under the Documents portion of NCJIS at DNA Database Sample Collection.pptx. These kits are to be used in accordance with the DNA Identification Information Act, and they should **not** be used to collect casework reference samples.

Who is authorized to collect?

Sworn and Civilian employees of:

- Law enforcement agencies
- County Jails
- Nebraska Department of Corrections and Parole
- Probation Administration
- Individuals assigned to collect by Interstate Compact (for out of state offenders)



DNA BSD Punch

Offender Samples (continued)

Who is to be collected?

- A person who is **convicted** of a **felony offense** or **other specified offense**, on or after July 15, 2010.
- A person who has been <u>convicted</u> of a felony offense or other specified offense before July 15, 2010, and who is still serving a term of confinement or probation shall not be released prior to the expiration of his or her maximum term of confinement or revocation or discharge from his or her probation unless and until a DNA sample has been collected.
- All registered Sex Offenders.

Are there any fees?

- A person convicted of a felony offense or other specified offense on or after July 15, 2010, who does not have a DNA sample available, must pay \$25.00 to the 'State DNA Sample and Data Base Fund'.
- Send payment to:

Nebraska Attorney General State DNA Sample and Data Base Fund P.O. Box 98920 Lincoln, NE 68509

A copy of the Nebraska State Patrol Fee Notice can be found under the Documents portion of NCJIS at <u>DNA Database Sample Collection Fee Notice.pdf</u>

The entire state statute can be found at http://nebraskalegislature.gov/

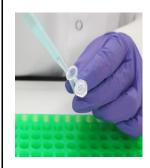
- Statutes §29-4101-§29-4115 address database DNA testing.
- Statutes §29-4001 -§29-4019 are Sex Offender Registry.

Why have I been asked to re-collect an offender sample?

You **may** be contacted by the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab and asked to recollect a sample for a variety of reasons. The following are a few of the common reasons necessitating recollection of samples:

- The Offender Collection Kit is expired
- A fingerprint/thumbprint or AFIS Live Scan Number is not present
- No identifying information is on the collection card and/or swab envelope
- The Offender Collection Kit was received by the lab greater than 5 days





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Analyst Katie Rector operating the BSD sample punch.

What's New in CODIS?

With the increase in the number of offender samples that are to be collected/analyzed, we have made changes that will allow us to improve our efficiency in the lab and benefit the collection agencies as well. By making these changes we will be able to analyze the samples in such a way so that the profiles can be uploaded and searched in a timelier manner. Katie Rector, State CODIS Administrator, will be traveling across Nebraska providing regional training on the new procedures. Dates and locations are coming soon. If you would like to host a training, please contact Katie at 402-471-8950.

New Offender Collection Kits

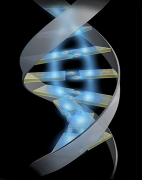
- The new kits will replace the buccal swabs with an EasiCollect Device. By using this new collector the laboratory is able to decrease the analysis time by 1-2 days.
- The new kits will also have some formatting changes on the sample envelope and collection card.
- The new Offender Collection Kits should be available in June.



NEW Offender Collection Kit

CODIS Prelog

- The prelog program will allow collecting agencies to search for offender samples that have been submitted to the laboratory.
- The prelog program will also allow collecting agencies to enter in the offender identifying information electronically. This will eliminate the manual entry on the collection card.



The prelog program is in the final stages of development and it should be available in 2011. You will be able to access it through a portal in NCJIS.

Casework Concerns

Eligible DNA profiles obtained from crime scene evidence can be entered into CODIS to be searched. In order to determine if a DNA profile is eligible for CODIS, we need as <u>much</u> information about the item of evidence as possible (how is it tied to the crime? where was it located? who does the item belong to? are there any people that need to provide elimination samples? etc.).

The Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab does <u>not</u> put suspect reference samples into the database. Please do not rely on CODIS to take the place of collecting reference samples for the cases you submit to the lab. Some evidence samples may not be eligible for CODIS so they may not get searched against the offender database. If the evidence samples are eligible to be searched in CODIS you will still need to collect a reference sample and submit it to the lab for court purposes. In summary, please submit reference samples for all parties involved in a case if they are available.

If there is a CODIS hit between your case and another case, or offender sample, you will be notified by the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab through a Hit Letter. This Hit Letter will provide you with the case and agency information and/or the offender identifying information. This information can be used as an investigative tool. Once a person has been identified, a new reference blood or buccal cell sample must be submitted to the Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab along with the NSP 750 submittal form as evidence for court purposes. The new reference sample will be analyzed and compared to the casework sample(s). Our conclusions will be provided to you in a Laboratory Report.

Please feel free to contact Katie Rector, State CODIS Administrator, at 402-471-8950 if you have any questions.



DNA analyst putting cutting into tube to start the DNA process.



DNA analyst operating the TECAN robot

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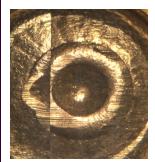
Forensic Scientist Sarah Zarnick test firing into the bullet recovery water tank

<u>Firearm / Toolmark</u> <u>Section Analysts</u>

Kent Weber

Amy Weber

Sarah Zarnick



Cartridge case comparison as viewed in the comparison microscope

Understanding NIBIN, A Firearms Related Database

Overview

The National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) is a federally-funded program administered by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives. The program began in 1999 and replaced an older ballistics database called DRUG-FIRE. The purpose of NIBIN is to discover linkages between firearm-related crimes that have not previously been associated to one another through other investigative means. The Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS), is a key component of this program and refers to the actual equipment utilized to acquire ammunition component images as well as to interface with the various NIBIN servers around the country.

The Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab is one of two NIBIN partners in the state of Nebraska, with the other being the Omaha Police Department. As of this publication, the NSP Crime Lab has assisted submitting agencies in discovering 20 case linkages ("hits") through the NIBIN system.



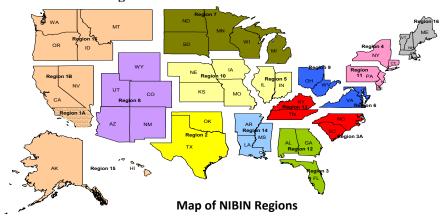
NSP Crime Lab IBIS Equipment

How Does NIBIN Work?

In order to perform a NIBIN entry, the lab analyst requires some form of fired ammunition (e.g. bullet, cartridge case, or shotshell). If fired ammunition is recovered at a crime scene, then the analyst enters those particular items into NIBIN. If a firearm is submitted for entry, however, the firearm is test fired at the NSP Crime Lab in order to produce known ammunition samples from that firearm. Those samples are then entered into NIBIN.

NIBIN entries are composed of basic investigative information coupled with images of the fired ammunition item(s). When images are captured through the IBIS equipment, the image data (consisting of patterns of varying width, contour, shading, and spatial relationships) are converted by algorithm into a unique electronic signature. These electronic signatures are compared to other NIBIN entries with similar class characteristics and electronic pattern signatures from around the region as well as the greater United States, if necessary. Within hours after entry, results of the electronic query are returned in the form of a ranked correlation list (again, comprised of basic investigative data and fired ammunition component images). Upon receiving the correlation results for a particular NIBIN entry, the Crime Lab's firearm section staff must review the images on the correlation list to determine whether similarities between two separate entries in the system are strong enough to merit forensic analysis. When it is determined that a more thorough examination of those items is needed, the jurisdictions involved in that potential case linkage are advised to submit the actual evidence items to the Crime Lab for firearm/toolmark analysis.

NIBIN correlations are performed automatically against other jurisdictions within the region to which Nebraska is assigned (Nebraska's region includes Iowa, Missouri, and Kansas). If correlations need to be conducted outside of our region (due to investigative information, suspect's former ties to other areas, etc.), that information should be included on the laboratory submittal form in order to prompt NIBIN correlation with that external region.



Upon completion of NIBIN entries, all submitted firearms and associated evidence are returned to the submitting agency along with a NIBIN letter. Receipt of a NIBIN letter is not an indication of a "hit," but rather a confirmation that all eligible items have been entered in the system. As mentioned above, submitting agencies are contacted at a later date if a potential "hit" is discovered. NIBIN hits can occur within hours of initial entry or many years later, should the right piece of evidence be submitted.



Examples of fired bullets in various conditions



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NIBIN Strengths vs. Weaknesses

The strength of the NIBIN system is similar to that of other forensic databases in that NIBIN permits the operator to quickly narrow down large volumes of data from multiple jurisdictions, and focus on only those entries with the same or similar evidence characteristics. In the absence of other investigative information (e.g. suspects, vehicles, etc.), the linkage of cases through evidence characteristics provides an avenue to form additional investigative leads or strategies.

The principle weaknesses of the NIBIN system are the lack of understanding and lack of participation by many law enforcement agencies throughout the state. **NIBIN provides the best value to submitting agencies when firearms and/or fired ammunition items are submitted soon after incident occurrence and when all law enforcement agencies in the area are consistent contributors.** For example, receipt of eligible NIBIN items when a case is ready for disposal/destruction is likely to lessen the utility of any case linkages, simply due to the fact that the evidence is no longer considered of value at that point. Likewise, a single law enforcement agency may hold the key to another jurisdiction's unsolved case (perhaps on opposite ends of the state!), but by not submitting NIBIN eligible items, that case linkage may never be established.

Therefore, agencies are highly encouraged to work together to contribute all NIBIN-eligible items in a timely fashion.

What NIBIN Does NOT Do

The NIBIN system has no connection to other firearm-related services utilized by law enforcement officials across the country. Therefore, the NIBIN system does not perform firearm traces or stolen gun queries.

NIBIN entry does not serve the same purpose as firearm function testing. While the goal of NIBIN handling of firearms is to obtain known test fires from those firearms, there are additional tests and documentation that occur with a request for firearm function testing analysis.

It is important to note that NIBIN is an administrative screening process, and does <u>not</u> act as an analytical procedure by itself. It is designed to locate <u>possible</u> ties between cases from the same or different jurisdictions. Actual confirmation of a potential hit is accomplished through traditional forensic firearm analysis, utilizing comparison microscopy to examine the physical ammunition items. There are three principle reasons for this:

- NIBIN entries do not capture the full range of analytical markings available on fired ammunition components.
- The human eye is better at sorting and discerning patterns than NIBIN's electronic screening process.
- Macroscopic/microscopic comparison of physical evidence permits a much better range of magnification and lighting options for analytical use.



What Should Be Submitted for NIBIN Entry?

The following **physical items** are recommended for NIBIN submittal:

- Any firearm that is illegally possessed, used in a crime, or suspected by law enforcement officials of having been used in a crime.
- Any found or seized property firearms that could have been involved in a crime or discarded following criminal activity.
- <u>All</u> fired ammunition evidence from crime scenes (drive-by shootings, homicides, robberies, etc.) even if a firearm is not recovered. If a fired ammunition item appears damaged, it may still exhibit partial markings that can be captured by the IBIS equipment.

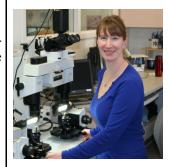
The following <u>information</u> is **required** along with the physical submissions, and can be inserted into the appropriate field on the NSP Crime Lab Evidence Submittal Form:

- Type of crime/incident
- Date of incident occurrence (or date of item recovery if incident date is not known)
- Agency case # (or property tracking #)
- Desired states/regions for NIBIN correlation if outside of Nebraska's NIBIN region

Note #1: There are <u>exceptions</u> with regard to firearm submittal for NIBIN entry. The IBIS equipment is not equipped to enter test fires from air rifles, air pistols, or black powder firearms, and therefore those types of firearms are not included in the NIBIN system. If questions arise as to the eligibility of a particular type of firearm, please contact firearm section staff.

Note #2: If, for whatever reason, firearms or ammunition components cannot be entered in NIBIN (due to damage, poor condition, or some other ineligibility), it will be documented as such and returned to the agency.





Forensic Scientist Amy Weber at the comparison microscope

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Common NIBIN Submittal Questions

How to submit?

Items for NIBIN entry are handled like any other evidence submission to the NSP Crime Lab. They are subject to the same packaging, sealing, and chain of custody requirements, and can be mailed or hand-delivered as with normal evidence submittals.

Cost to agencies

Like other casework submittals to the NSP Crime Lab, there is **no fee** associated with NIBIN submissions. The only cost to the submitting agency is the expense of postage, fuel, and/or supplies that are normally utilized when preparing and submitting items to the Crime Lab.

Parting Thoughts on NIBIN...

- All eligible items received in firearm-related casework are automatically included in NIBIN, as a matter of standard procedure. It is not necessary to re-submit previous casework items for subsequent NIBIN entry.
- Firearm/Toolmark casework is not subject to the same firearm/ ammunition restrictions listed above for NIBIN. Questions regarding analytical capabilities of the Firearm/Toolmark Section can be directed to any of the section staff.
- NIBIN backlog and turnaround times are calculated <u>separately</u> from firearm/toolmark casework.
- **Screening** of firearm-related evidence prior to submittal is **not recommended**. The NSP Crime Lab has a wide range of equipment and procedures that facilitate evaluation and examination of damaged evidence.

If questions arise regarding NIBIN-related issues, please contact Sarah Zarnick at 402-471-8925 or sarah.zarnick@nebraska.gov.



For more information about the NIBIN program (statistics, participants, etc.), please visit www.nibin.gov.

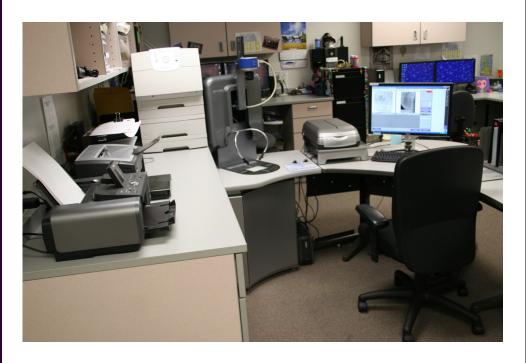
What is AFIS?

AFIS stands for an Automated Fingerprint Identification System. AFIS consists of a two part database, one being known fingerprint and palm print impressions, and the other part containing latent (unknown) impressions.

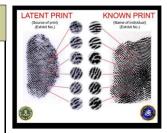
Nebraska AFIS went live on August 23, 1995. With Nebraska's May 2007 AFIS upgrade came palm print capabilities, the ability to store more than one incident or arrest per person record in AFIS, and an increased ability to send all fingerprints electronically to the FBI's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System (IAFIS). According to the FBI's statistics from March 2011, IAFIS has more than 68.7 million people in the criminal master file, along with about 30 million civil prints.

For more information on IAFIS please check: http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/fingerprints biometrics/iafis/iafis

As of May 10th, 2011, the Nebraska AFIS database contains 490,690 person records; 778,850 incident records; and 12,402 latent impressions.



NSP Crime Laboratory AFIS Latent Workstation



Lantent Fingerprint

Section Analysts

Mariana Ward
Steve Burke
Bridget Driver



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AFIS Latent Print Submissions

Known fingerprints and latent fingerprints are submitted into AFIS a variety of ways:

• Tenprint cards can be scanned into the system from ink rolled cards or captured on a livescan and submitted electronically.

• Latent prints can be scanned in, captured using the AFIS system digital camera, or imported from a CD or DVD.

Once the latent impression is entered, the system looks at a thinned image version of the impression and it encodes the image with the minutiae. Any incorrectly plotted minutiae are then cleaned up by an examiner, who also indicates the pattern type along with the core and delta areas of the impression.

The impression is then sent for search against the selected databases, either known impressions, unknown impressions (latents) or both. During the search, AFIS looks at a relative distance between the encoded minutiae in the submitted impression, and compares that information against every impression available in the database.

The respondents returned are based on the scores generated by the AFIS matchers. The examiner then compares each respondent to the impression that was submitted for search. At a minimum, we will request 30 respondents per database (30 from the know impressions and 30 from the unknown impressions), per submitted latent impression. Currently, for latent searches, we are only able to send latent fingerprints to the FBI. Palm print submission capabilities are being worked on and should be available in the near future.

Collecting Legible Fingerprint and Palm Print Impressions

Rolled impressions are the ten individually taken fingerprint images rolled from nail to nail. The plain impressions are used to verify the sequence and accuracy of the rolled impressions. Plain impressions are taken simultaneously without rolling. These are referred to as plain, slap, or flat impressions.

Fingerprints can be recorded utilizing the following methods:

- **Standard Fingerprint Card** (e.g., FD-249 and FD-258)—Use ink to record fingerprint images on standard fingerprint cards.
- **LiveScan**—Fingerprint images can be submitted electronically using a livescan device. There are currently 28 livescans throughout Nebraska. All livescans in Nebraska have the capability to perform a quick, "lights out" two finger search of all 490,690 person records in AFIS.

If hands are moist, wipe each finger with rubbing alcohol. If hands are dry, use a small amount of hand lotion and wipe off any residue.

If capturing fingerprints electronically, ensure that the capture pad is free of dust, dirt, and any residual fingerprint images.



Collecting Legible Fingerprint and Palm Print Impressions (cont)



Fingerprint Card Examples



Criminal fingerprint card FD-249



Roll the finger on the inking plate or pad from one edge of the nail to the other and from just below the crease of the first joint to the tip of the finger.

When using the ink and paper method and a rolled impression is not acceptable, you may use an adhesive retab to cover the fingerprint in its space. Only two retabs can be applied to each fingerprint block. For live scan, the image should be deleted and retaken.

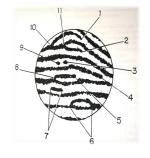
All required textual information should be completed. It is important to enter the appropriate data in all fields when known. Do not forget to have the fingerprint card signed both by you and the person being fingerprinted.

Collecting legible fingerprints and palm prints for comparison purposes is extremely important for the success of the identification of latent impressions, which often contain minimal ridge detail.

AFIS is a screening tool which filters through the database of numerous impressions and brings back a list of possible matches to the submitted latent impression(s). AFIS does not determine identification or non-identification, a qualified latent print examiner does.



Poor quality of AFIS database images, coupled with low quality and quantity of detail in latent impression(s) may cause missed identification(s). We cannot control the quality of the latent impressions submitted, but officers rolling fingerprint impressions can control the quality of the known impressions that populate Nebraska AFIS database.



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fingerprint technician

Collecting Legible Fingerprint and Palm Print Impressions (cont)

For more information on capturing legible fingerprint impressions or for information on special circumstances please visit these web sites:

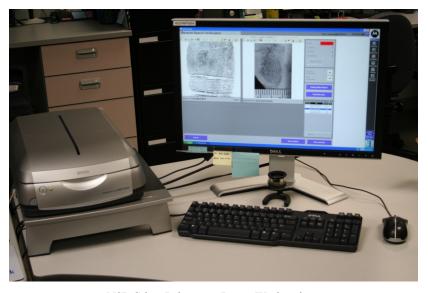
http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/fingerprints_biometrics/recording-legible-fingerprints/takingfps

http://www.fbi.gov/about-us/cjis/fingerprints_biometrics/recording-legible-fingerprints/capturing-legible-fingerprints/view

Casework Concerns

If latent lifts are being submitted for **analysis and comparison**, <u>please</u> make sure that any impressions that may have been accidentally left on the lift tape by the collecting officer are <u>crossed off</u>. Otherwise, these impressions will also be treated as unknown latent impressions and will be searched through the Nebraska AFIS.

Any received (from latent lift) or developed (from items collected at the crime scene) latent impression that is considered to be of value for comparison purposes will be searched through the Nebraska AFIS database.



NSP Crime Laboratory Latent Workstation



Casework Concerns (cont)

Due to the fact that the number of searches submitted to the IAFIS database is limited, only latent impressions from the high profile cases are being submitted for IAFIS database search on regular basis. Please indicate on the Evidence Submittal form NSP 750 whether you would want value latent impressions from your case searched through the IAFIS database, otherwise they will only be searched through the Nebraska AFIS.

Any fingerprint impressions submitted by your agency for comparison purposes (elimination prints from the victim, suspect, officer, etc.) will also be entered into the Nebraska AFIS, unless the individual already has a Nebraska State ID or an AFIS number. If the individual's fingerprints are not already in the database, the impressions will be scanned as an applicant profile (no criminal record is generated!), and they will be retained for future comparison purposes.

Periodically, the latent section examiners will re-submits latent impressions for subsequent AFIS search from cases where the statute of limitations is **NOT** expired. When an AFIS cold hit occurs, a report will be generated and your agency will be notified of this identification. The laboratory report will be sent to the officer who originally submitted the case for fingerprint analysis.

Latent impressions from cases in which the statute of limitations has expired will be removed from the Nebraska AFIS database. In this instance, the NSP Crime Laboratory Latent Section will NOT send a laboratory report to your agency.

If you receive any additional information with regard to a case (i.e. new suspect), or if you would like your case to be sent for a subsequent AFIS search, please contact the NSP Crime Laboratory (main number) or the crime laboratory Latent Print Section supervisor, Mariana Ward at 402-471-8918.





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Tips on Evidence!

General Evidence Submission Tips: Sealing and Sharps

One of the first things looked for by evidence technicians when receiving evidence submitted at the crime laboratory is proper seals on the external evidence packaging. When sealing a package, first make sure that all openings to the package are **taped** shut (no staples) and then **initial the tape and package** as demonstrated by the photo. If the evidence you are going submit for processing is **wet evidence**, please let it dry before sending it in to the Crime Lab.





Evidence Section Staff

Jan Johnson

Margaret Wiesen

Vicki Hopkins

PROPER SEAL

IMPROPER SEALS

When mailing a package Certified Mail, UPS, FedEx, etc., please ensure that the submittal form is inside an envelope and taped to the OUTSIDE of the package. If you are using a mailer from the Post Office, the submittal form should go on the outside of the mailer. The reasoning behind attaching the submittal form to the outside of the package is to ensure that the evidence technicians will not have to open your evidence to retrieve the form. Therefore the integrity of the evidence will not be compromised and it will remain in its original submitted condition for scientific analysis.

Occasionally, it is necessary for "sharp" items to be submitted to the laboratory as part of a case (e.g. razor blades, knives, and broken glass). Due to the fact that these types of items can pose a hazard, not only to the analysts who will test them but to all personnel who may handle them to include evidence technicians, postal workers, etc, it is **EXTREMELY** important that they be packaged properly!

If a sharp item must be submitted for analysis, please place any potential hazards in a **PUNCTURE RESISTANT package** – not simply a plastic baggie or manila envelope. CLEARLY label the item as "SHARP" and indicate its presence on the laboratory submittal form. Your help in keeping all personnel safe is greatly appreciated!

Evidence Submission and CODIS

Do **not** submit **EVIDENCE samples** (i.e. **case evidence/case reference swabs**) in CODIS envelopes. The provided CODIS envelopes/swabs are to be used **strictly for CODIS samples**. Improper use of the CODIS envelopes/swabs can lead to numerous problems for the CODIS technicians and for the evidence technicians.



Spotlight on Forensics - Katie Rector (Biology Unit)



Name: Katie Rector

Hometown: North Platte, NE

Education: BS with a major in Biology from

Creighton University

MFS with an emphasis in Biology and Chemistry

from Nebraska Wesleyan University

Work Experience: NSP Crime Lab Evidence Technician (2005-2006)

NSP Crime Lab Forensic Scientist-Biology (2006-Present)

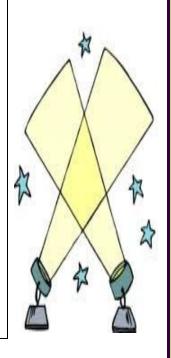
NSP Crime Lab State CODIS Administrator (2010-Present)

Hobbies: "Game Nights" with my friends and family

Contact Information: Lab Phone: 402-471-8950

Desk Phone: 402-471-8822

Email: katherine.rector@nebraska.gov





Laboratory Director: Pam Zilly

Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab 1233 Arapahoe St. Lincoln. NE 68506

(main) 402-471-8950 (fax) 402-471-8954

Hours of Operation: Monday-Friday 8am—5pm

Evidence Receipt Hours: Monday-Friday 9am-4pm

To contact the crime lab with general laboratory questions, call the main phone number or email Vicki Hopkins at:

Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov

The Lab Report Editor:
Amy Weber

Katie Rector (CODIS)

Hillary Duin (Lab Tech)

Melissa Kreikemeier

Brandy Porter

Heidi Young

Nebraska State Patrol Crime Lab Staff Contact Information:

Nebraska State Pa	trol Crime La	b Staff Contact Information
Laboratory Director:		
Pam Zilly	402-471-8967	Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov
Evidence Section:		
Jan Johnson (sup.)	402-471-8951	Jan.Johnson@nebraska.gov
Margaret Wiesen	402-471-8950	Margaret.Wiesen@nebraska.gov
Quality Assurance Manag	ger:	
Vicki Hopkins	402-471-8983	Vicki.Hopkins@nebraska.gov
Physical Sciences Unit:		
Scott Lanagan (Manager)	402-471-8877	Scott.Lanagan@nebraska.gov
Firearm/Toolmark Section		
Kent Weber (sup.)	402-471-8960	Kent.Weber@nebraska.gov
Amy Weber	402-471-8699	Amy.Weber@nebraska.gov
Sarah Zarnick	402-471-8925	Sarah.Zarnick@nebraska.gov
Latent Fingerprint Sectio	<u>n:</u>	
Mariana Ward (sup.)	402-471-8918	Mariana. Ward@nebraska.gov
Steve Burke	402-471-8962	Steven.Burke@nebraska.gov
Bridget Driver	402-471-8914	Bridget.Driver@nebraska.gov
Questioned Documents Se	ection:	
Pam Zilly	402-471-8967	Pam.Zilly@nebraska.gov
Chemistry Unit:		
Celeste Laird (Manager)	402-471-8978	Celeste.Laird@nebraska.gov
Controlled Substances		
Vicky Cowan	402-471-8917	Vicky.Cowan@nebraska.gov
Abbey Dodds	402-471-8977	Abbegayle.Dodds@nebraska.gov
<u>Toxicology</u>		
Brad Rutledge	402-471-8979	Brad.Rutledge@nebraska.gov
<u>Trace</u>		
Mike Auten	402-471-8987	Mike.Auten@nebraska.gov
	<u>Biology</u>	Unit:
Jason Linder	402-471-8958	Jason.Linder@nebraska.gov

402-471-8822

402-471-8957

402-471-8870

402-471-8871

402-471-8966

Katherine.Rector@nebraska.gov

Brandy.Porter@nebraska.gov

Heidi.Young@nebraska.gov

Hillary.Duin@nebraska.gov

Melissa.Kreikemeier@nebraska.gov