

# Memorandum

**Date:** November 13, 2012  
**To:** All Forensic Personnel  
**From:** Sgt. Ruben D. Cintron Jr.  
**Subject:** Latent print verification protocol  
**CC:**



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## **PURPOSE**

In order to gain uniformity and establish professional standards in fingerprint verifications, please adhere to the following protocol. This applies to all latent print examiners, latent print cards and developed prints on evidence. This protocol will enable us to assure the quality of each examiners work is being maintained, meet our RPM requirements and achieve our training goals simultaneously.

## **Latent Print Testing**

Annual proficiency testing will be a vital part of the Forensics unit latent fingerprint Quality Assurance measures. Each technician and or detective who is required to analyze, compare, evaluate, and independently verify latent fingerprints/palm prints within the unit will have to submit to a latent fingerprint proficiency test that will be administered once a year by the unit supervisor. The unit supervisor will ensure the timely submission of the test and oversee the taking of the test. The proficiency test will monitor the performance of each individual latent print examiner. This testing is important to identify possible deficiencies in protocol or to highlight areas where improvement may be achieved through additional training.

Proficiency tests may be developed internally or obtained from external testing services. The unit supervisor may randomly insert blind tests into the in-house case work. These tests will attempt to duplicate the scope and difficulty of everyday casework.

Each latent print examiner will have to take the test individually and the test and test results will be retained in the unit supervisor's office. A record for each latent print examiner documenting the dates and results for each proficiency test will be

maintained in the examiners' training folder during their employment for a period of five years after the examiner terminates employment.

Competency of each latent print examiner will be determined by the successful completion of the fingerprint training protocol as documented by the Forensics Unit supervisor and or his/her designee.

### **Corrective Action and Remedial Training**

If an error is discovered as a result of proficiency testing, case review, technical review, or administrative review steps will be taken to correct the error in an effort to prevent the error from re-occurring.

The Forensic Unit Supervisor and/or his/her designee will review the test results to verify if an error was made and to determine the reason why the error occurred.

The Forensic Unit Supervisor and/or his/her designee will evaluate the incorrect result and classify the error as clerical or analytical in nature.

### **Comparison of Inked Impressions**

In the course of your duties, if you are assigned to complete a comparison between latent impressions from an unknown individual to a known set of inked exemplar prints (i.e. coroner's case, inked print on a traffic citation/ misdemeanor citations, etc) it is acceptable for any qualified latent print examiner (Forensic Detective / Technician) to complete the comparison based on their training and experience. This examination must be independently verified by any qualified latent print examiner (Forensics Detective / Technician) who, based on their training and experience has been deemed competent to independently verify the results. A list of all qualified latent print examiners within the Forensics Unit will be created and the unit supervisor will maintain a list of their names.

Remember, that the Forensics Unit has RPM requirements which must be adhered to. In that regard, attempt to select latent print examiner, that will be available to see a case through from beginning to the end without delay. Depending on how involved the case, all work should be completed within the 10 day RPM requirements.

Should both latent print examiners arrive at different conclusions, both should discuss their findings and if unable to come to an agreement, a third independent latent print examiner must be consulted for a final determination. Remember, the unit supervisor will maintain a list of the qualified latent print examiners available. The list may also include a latent print examiner from an outside agency due to qualification requirements.

## **Examiners in Training**

Any time you are given a latent print comparison case as part of the training protocol, you must note your findings and then approach two qualified latent print examiners for independent analysis/verification. Subsequent to their assessment they will discuss their findings in comparison to yours as a part of the training tool. It is not desirable to have less than two verifications.

In order to achieve the maximum amount of fingerprint training possible it is paramount that you be exposed to as many latent prints as possible. In order to achieve this goal, please share your print cases with each other. At the completion of your assessment and verification take your latent cards, place them in a properly marked case file with the exemplar cards and forward them to the next technician/investigator. Each technician/investigator is responsible to keep a log of the cases he/she are sharing.

The person in training will indicate to whom they gave the lift cards to and on what date. The recipient will also keep track of when they received the latent lift cards and when they passed them on to the next technician/investigator.

When dealing with a non-training situation, the same holds true with latent cards received on a daily basis. After these cards are evaluated they are to be passed on to the next technician/investigator for independent ACE-V purposes. The initial assessment will stand unless disputed by a second independent latent print examiner. You may take notes to confirm your assessment. However, the notes will not be kept on file with the latent cards. In the event there are differing opinions, this will serve as an additional training tool. Your notes will then be transferred onto the SH-126 form (Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office Latent Information Report) and your notes are to be destroyed.

## **Latent Print Evaluation/Comparisons (Non-Training)**

You may deem a card completely unusable if you can find no useable friction ridge detail. You must have your results be independently verified by a second qualified latent print examiner.

If you, based on your training and experience, have made a judgment call relative to the usability/comparability of latent fingerprint(s)/palm print(s) such as: fingerprint pattern type for elimination/inclusion only, friction ridge detail for elimination/inclusion only, useable for comparison purposes (but not of CAL-ID quality), or useable for comparison purposes and of CAL-ID quality, you must make sure to see the case through to the end without delay. Please take notes regarding your findings. The ACE-V methodology will be applied to all evaluations and comparisons by those qualified latent print examiners working the case. If the findings of the two qualified

latent print examiners are different and neither party can come to an agreement after discussing each other's findings, then seek a third independent examiner to assist.

\* In the event that a BOC is received requesting a comparison be done to a suspect(s) after latent lift cards have been evaluated please adhere to the following:

(1) Refer to the yellow triplicate SH-126 latent information report found on file along with the latent lift cards

(2) The original latent evaluation results obtained by the initial two qualified latent print examiners whose initials/body numbers are listed on the yellow SH-126 form will be used for comparison purposes. Remember, a more qualified fingerprint examiner may find more identifiable characteristics.

(3) Your comparisons will be based on all latent information written on the latent lift cards and not only on those that were deemed usable for comparison based on the ridge detail. Remember that a more qualified examiner may find more identifiable characteristics.

(4) You must list the original latent print evaluation results & names of the original two latent print examiners in your comparison report and document the fact that you based your comparison(s) using all the information available in the latent lift card file for that case.

(5) Make sure that your comparison results are independently verified by a (qualified) latent print examiner.

### **CAL-ID Candidate List Verifications**

Once a print has been entered into the CAL-ID system and the candidate list is ready for review, the side by side comparison of the CAL-ID returns should be conducted.

Should the friction ridge detail appear to be in agreement with the candidate's exemplar print, then you must use the candidate's CII number to obtain their exemplar prints from the DOJ Automated Archive System. Two latent print examiners must conduct their own independent comparison using the unknown latent print against the candidate's exemplar print. Once the two examiners have reached their own independent conclusions, both will discuss their findings. If the findings of the two independent examiners are different and neither party can come

to an agreement after discussing each other's findings, then seek a third examiner to verify.

Reminder: In order to meet our CAL-ID RPM requirements, CAL-ID prints from latent print cards have to be entered into CAL-ID System within 3 days of being received.

Textbooks have been purchased which will enhance your fingerprint comparison training. Between cases it is critical that you spend some time reading these. Inside each textbook you will find a list that indicates in which order they should be read. Set aside some time each day to read at least one chapter.

If you have any questions about the content of this protocol, please do not hesitate to contact the Forensics Unit Sergeant for clarification.