SANTA BARBARA COUNTY
SHERIFF'S OFFCE
FORENSICS UNIT

CRIME SCENE QUALITY MANUAL

1.0   SCOPE

A quality assurance program provides a mechanism whereby the unit's performance can be monitored, deficiencies identified, and corrective measures taken. Some elements of the quality assurance program may be routine while others, such as proficiency testing, may be periodic. All members of the Forensics Unit are expected to participate in the quality assurance program.

All guidelines for the implementation of the quality assurance program for the Forensics Unit can be found in the *Forensics Unit Quality Assurance Manual.* This document serves as the backbone for the quality assurance program for the Forensics Unit. The following manual will address how to implement portions of the laboratory quality assurance guidelines as they apply to the Forensics Unit. Specific information regarding laboratory policy statements, purpose, objectives, organizational table, responsibilities, job descriptions, employee development programs, program administrators, types of errors, and analytical discrepancy policy are covered in the *Forensics Unit Quality Assurance Manual* and will not be restated in this manual.

2.0   QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

2.1.   Technical Training Program

a·   Forensics Unit staff members are required to participate in and pass a 40-hour Crime Scene Investigation course given by organizations such as the California Criminalistics Institute (CCI), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), or other recognized organizations or Field Evidence Training course offered by approved colleges in the region.

b.   All members of the section participate in an in-house crime scene training program directed by members of the Forensics Unit. This training course addresses equipment, procedures, policy, testimony, safety and security issues relating to the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office and the Forensics Unit in particular.

c.   A crime scene training binder containing all the relevant training material put together in a modular training format will be provided to members of the unit at the onset of training. This training binder will include a syllabus clearly describing the knowledge and skills needed to complete the training. The time provided for each module will be dependent on material covered, number of individuals participating and resources available at time of training.

d.   Specific reading assignments, practical assignments, competency tests and proficiency tests where appropriate will be given to each participant to evaluate their understanding of the material being presented.

    1.   Participants in the in-house crime scene training must complete each training module, unless that individual has been waived from a particular module due to experience.

    2.   An evaluation of any deficiency (s) will be made for each participant and a determination made as to what further work needs to be done by the participant to satisfactorily complete that module. If the further work corrects the deficiency then the participant may proceed to the next module.

    3.   If further work in that module fails to correct the deficiency, then the unit supervisor will meet with the participant to determine a course of action.

e.   In addition to the training binder, practical demonstrations of the techniques and specific equipment used by this laboratory at crimes scenes will be demonstrated.

f.   As a participant satisfactorily completes the topics in a module, they, along with their assigned trainer will initial and date the topics. When the entire module is completed, the trainee and their trainer will initial and date the module. The unit supervisor will prepare a Memorandum of Training, noting what was accomplished, the date(s), and that the participant has successfully completed the module. A copy of this memorandum will be retained by the participant and a copy will be placed in the trainee's file by the Forensics Unit supervisor.

g.   Trainees may undertake activities in areas in which a Memorandum of Training has been issued even if they have not completed all the elements of the section's training program. In order to do engage in this work, they must have completed a competency sample and a written or oral examination regarding the principles and procedures of the work that they have been authorized to undertake.

2.2.   Continued Education

a. Each member of the Forensics Unit is a technical member of the unit and is required to participate in continuing education each year. Members are encouraged to participate in crime scene training courses when offered, attend study group meetings on crime scenes and to discuss their recent experiences at crime scenes with other members of the unit and in other disciplines. Open dialogue between members of the Forensics Unit helps to ensure that any problems encountered during the crime scene processing, laboratory processing, and/or reconstruction process will be addressed.

3.0 REPORTING AND RECORDKEEPING

3.1   Tiburon RMS and Automated Reporting System (ARS)

a. Forensics Unit members will complete the property section and a narrative concerning their activities by using the Automated Reporting System. The ARS system will be used to complete the booking process.

b. Once the report is completed, it will be submitted to the Unit Supervisor or designee for technical and administrative review.

c. Technical and administrative reviews are required for all case reports issued by the Forensics Unit. These two types of case reviews are intended to insure that the appropriate and accepted methods/techniques were performed to insure that the proper conclusions were supported by the observations and analysis obtained. These reviews are also done to insure that the case report meets all the requirements set forth in the *Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual.*

d. The technical review is designed to check for mathematical accuracy when applicable, to determine if the report reflects the work performed, and to determine if the conclusion(s) reached (if any) are supported by the findings.

e. The administrative review is designed to check spelling and grammar. The administrative review will also check the following: that transcribed item numbers have been correctly entered in the report, that all examined items are reported, that the report reflects all essential information (casework identifiers and chain of custody) and whether or not laboratory policy was followed.

f. Only designated Forensics Unit personnel are allowed to technically review and administratively review Crime Scene reports. Those individuals will be provided computer access so that the report can be accessed and reviewed.

3.2.   Technical Review

a.   Technical review will be performed by an individual who has the technical expertise, experience and training to conduct a thorough technical review of the procedures used at the crime scene. The Forensics Unit supervisor usually performs such reviews, but may designate an individual with the appropriate credentials to conduct reviews. Technical review is documented on the paper records by marking TR____, with the initials of the reviewer in the space, on the first page of the case packet.

b.   The technical reviewer will verify the following:

- Chain of custody documented;
- Any mathematical calculations accurately performed and recorded;
- Examination results documented, written, photographed and/or proper instrumental data submitted for review;
- Instrumental data should include (when applicable), instrumental conditions, standards or instrumental data from known source, the results of a library search where appropriate, data from questioned sample(s);
- Any conclusions reached will be supported by tables of results, latent information reports, diagrams and/or photographs.

c.   If simple errors, such as omissions, transpositions or miscalculation are noted by the technical reviewer, these will be brought to the attention of the writer for correction. Once these have been corrected, technical review of the case report will be performed again.

d.   Once the technical reviewer has verified that all the appropriate information to support the conclusion(s) is present in the report, the reviewer will pass the report to the administrative reviewer. In many instances, the same individual will do the technical review and administrative reviews.

e.   The Forensics Unit has developed a technical review checklist to assist in completing technical reviews. This checklist is attached as an appendix to this SOP. Its use will provide a helpful guideline for some technical reviewers.

3.3   Administrative Review

a.   All reports are subjected to an administrative review. This review is usually performed by the technical reviewer, but may be performed by the supervisor (or another person designated by the supervisor) with the exclusion of the person who wrote the report.

b.   The administrative reviewer of the report will verify the following:

- Case Number (or other unique identifier) present on each page;
- Page number is present on each page;
- Analyst's name and or their initials/body number are present on each page.

- Description of each item collected is present on property form or a reference is made to refer to the agency's report (property section);
- Documentation complete, including diagrams, tables, and photographs (when applicable);
- Reference in report of any laboratory photographs which were taken of items examined;
- Date of technical review and initials of reviewer on first page of notes.

c. The administrative reviewer of the report will verify that:

- The correct information in provided in the report header, including agency, agency case number, type of crime, victim, suspect, investigating officer, and any other related case numbers;

- Spelling is correct;

- Grammar is correct;

- Each page of the report has a unique identifier, page number, and that the first and last pages reflect the total number of pages

d. Once any simple errors have been corrected, an additional administrative review of the case report will be performed again by the same administrative reviewer.

e. The reviewer will document the administrative review by marking AR__ on the first page of the report, inserting his initials into the underlined space.

f. When the reviews have been completed, the report along with any e-file attachments (in jpeg format) will be uploaded by the author into the Automated Reporting System (ARS), owner approved, and sent to the Forensics Unit Supervisor for final approval. The report containing the Forensic Supervisor's final approval will be available for reference in the Automated Reporting System (ARS) for SBSO Patrol deputies and SBSO detectives.

3.4 Errors

a. Simple Errors

Spelling, grammar, omissions or transposition of information can be easily corrected by the analyst. The author will be informed of the error by the reviewer and will be allowed to correct it before the report is issued.

1. The reviewer may correct simple errors if the report author is notified and accepts those simple corrections by the reviewer.

2. The individuals performing the technical review will not be held independently accountable for technical errors as the accuracy of the report ultimately rests with the writer of the report.

b. Remediation

Remedial action will result for those errors which are not found to be simple errors. Those errors that involve such issues as the misidentification of items, misapplication of testing procedures, operating laboratory equipment in an improper manner, or using/operating faulty equipment will require remedial action.

The Forensic Supervisor will be informed of serious error requiring remediation and will be consulted with respect to proposed corrective action. Refer to the *Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual* for procedures related to corrective action.

3.5 Security of Case Report and Storage

1. Security of Case Report

a. Forensic reports (also known as Bureau of Criminalistics reports - BOC) are electronically uploaded into the SBSO Automated Reporting System (ARS).

b. Departmental access to certain Forensic reports and e-file attachments will depend on the nature of the report (ex: access to Officer Involved Shooting reports will be restricted to certain persons).

2. Photography

Most photography at crime scenes is performed using digital cameras. SOP CSI- 008 covers the policies and procedures for crime scene photography. Refer to the SBSO Photography policy for information on digital media storage and retrieval of images from the Forensics Unit digital imaging system.

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2012	Sgt. R. Cintron/2281		11/13/12

Technical Review Checklist

DOCUMENTATION

_____Case number, evidence tag number, assisting officer(s), total time to write report, date/time report written, evidence disposition?

_____Total number of pages on first and last page?

_____Are evidence Items packaged properly? Was there a property form completed?

_____Was the chain of custody properly documented?

_____Case report mentions photographs taken for reference purposes?

_____Are there any E-File attachments in jpeg format? These may include but are not limited to: final approved BOC face page, photographs, crime scene sketches, SBSO Latent information Reports, tables of comparisons (listing results), CAL-ID printouts, charts, etc. Are these mentioned in the report?

_____Does the report document those procedures followed, chemical/physical processes conducted, standards and controls used, observations and results of the examinations?

_____Have all prints been independently analyzed/compared/evaluated/and verified by a competent examiner?

_____Is the report in compliance with section policies (section abbreviations, etc.)?

_____Is there sufficient narrative documentation in the case report to support conclusions?

_____Is there proper documentation of chain of custody for evidence items?

REPORT

_____Final report accounts for crime scene processed and/or evidence item(s) Processed (chain, results)?

_____Spelling, grammar, accuracy of case information, item numbers, dates, etc.?

_____Description of method employed (when applicable) is included in report?

_____Report uploaded in Automated Reporting System (ARS)?

Technical Review (TR)	Administrative Review (AR)
Case #:	Case #:
Reviewer's Initials:	Reviewer's Initials:
Date of Review:	Date of Review:
Pages Reviewed:	Pages Reviewed: