Top 10 Identification Section FAQ's

Q: In what order are cases examined? What if I have a "rush" on a case?
A: Rush cases, including court dates or court orders, violent crimes against persons (e.g. homicides, sexual assaults), and other high profile cases are considered the highest priorities and will be worked first. All other cases are examined on a first in, first out basis. Please contact the Crime Laboratory to notify us of any updated information on court dates or reasons that cases need to be expedited.

Q: Why should I submit elimination prints for a case?
A: Elimination standard prints (both fingers and palms) of anyone who had contact with the evidence should be submitted for comparison whether or not there is a suspect in the case. Providing elimination prints limits the amount of time spent searching victim prints through the AFIS/NGI system. It also informs the agency if they have any evidence remaining on the case (if the latent prints get excluded to the victim/eliminations, they may then belong to a suspect). If elimination prints are requested via a report, please provide them to the laboratory.

Q: Do you have access to Law Enforcement Officers' standards?
A: Law Enforcement Applicants have only been retained in the AFIS since 2010. If you were hired prior to that date, or if you haven't applied for a LEO position since then, your card is not in the system. Please submit standards for any Law Enforcement Personnel who had contact with submitted evidence.

Q: If the person has a record, do I still need to submit fingerprint/palm prints standards?
A: Whenever possible, it is best to submit standard fingerprints and palm prints for any suspects, victims, or other individuals who may have been in contact with the item. Even though a person may have an arrest record in the State of Wisconsin, this does not always mean that they have the necessary standards on file for comparison with any unknown prints. Often times, fingerprint cards are missing some areas of friction ridge detail, such as the tips and sides of the fingers, and palm print standards are often not taken.

Q: What information do I need to provide in order for you to obtain a fingerprint/palm print card that is on file for an individual?
A: In order to obtain fingerprint/palm print standards from the Crime Information Bureau or the FBI, please provide the complete name and date of birth of the individual and a Wisconsin State Identification Number (SID#) and/or an FBI#, if possible. The Crime Laboratory is not able to acquire cards from other states using their SID#s, so if you cannot get an FBI number, please contact that state and request a comparison quality/certified fingerprint card print-out which can then be submitted to the laboratory. We cannot accept fingerprint cards for comparison via e-mail, however a digital copy of a standard can be submitted on a disk if it is at least 500 ppi and in TIF format.

Q: If I know my suspect is in AFIS/NGI, why do I have to provide a fingerprint card or SID#?
A: Due to the nature of AFIS/NGI and latent prints, even if a record is in the system it may not "hit". Poor quality, incompletely rolled fingerprint cards may not contain the detail observed in the latent print. Additionally, both latent and standard prints can show signs of movement and distortion which may interfere with them "hitting" in the system. Time and effort can be saved if the analyst

can compare the individual before entering them into the system. While the AFIS/NGI is very accurate, it is not as accurate as a trained fingerprint examiner.

Q: What are the requirements for submitting digital images of fingerprint or footwear/tire track impressions?
A: The Wisconsin Crime Laboratory Bureau does not accept evidence images submitted via e-mail. The Laboratory will only accept electronic evidence images if they are submitted on an acceptable data-storage medium such as a CD-R or DVD-R. Images should be scaled, with the scale on the same plane as the impression, the impression should fill the frame, and a tripod should always be used. Impressions used for comparative analysis should be captured in the highest resolution lossless format available (i.e. RAW or TIF) and the impression should be in focus. All digital images of impressions should be submitted for examination even if the physical evidence is submitted as well.

Q: What considerations should be taken when submitting items to the Crime Laboratory?
A: The value (whether monetary or sentimental) of items being submitted for latent processing should be ascertained prior to their submission to the Crime Laboratory. Chemical processes used by the Identification Section can cause permanent damage to electronics, collectibles, antiques, etc. If the evidence was processed by the agency prior to its submission to the Crime Laboratory, notations regarding prior processes performed should be indicated on the Submission Form to assist the laboratory on further processing and preservation. Processing non-porous (i.e. glass or plastic) items with superglue prior to submission can substantially increase the chances of developing suitable latent prints. In addition, porous (i.e. paper) items should never be processed with fingerprint powders. Submitters should refrain from making marks or notations on items of evidence (i.e. circling impressions) because latent impressions are often invisible to the naked eye and the markings can destroy or obliterate impressions that could have been of value for comparison purposes.

Q: What does the conclusion "no identification or exclusion effected" mean"?
A: No identification or exclusion means that the examiner is unable to identify or exclude the source of the questioned latent print. This may be due to the quality of the latent print, the quality of the known prints, poorly rolled known standards that do not contain the appropriate area of friction ridge detail for comparison, or if the latent print does not meet the exclusion criteria. A latent print that does not meet the exclusion criteria may be able to be identified if compared to the correct standards.

Q: What is an Unsolved Latent Database Search?
A: Many latent prints searched through the AFIS/NGI systems will be registered into the unsolved latent databases if they do not "hit" on the initial search. These prints will automatically continue to be checked against all new sets of known prints as they are entered into the system. If a "hit" is made and verified due to a subsequent search, a report will be issued to notify the submitter of this new information.