



Policy Overview

The original version of this policy was issued on August 15, 2019. The policy has since been revised and made effective on March 1, 2022. This version supersedes any previous published versions. This preservation policy eliminates the current 5-day hold on NIBIN processing of firearms. On June 15, 2010, circular 10-0615-122 established a 5-business day hold on firearms evidence so requests for other analysis (such as latent prints or DNA) could be submitted prior to NIBIN processing.

The firearms magazine preservation policy is designed to preserve the integrity of possible evidence (such as latent prints or DNA) that may have been deposited on the magazine. Preserving the evidence allows for NIBIN analysis and entry to be performed immediately after the evidence is received at the laboratory, eliminating the need for the 5-business day hold.

Magazine Preservation

To better fulfill stakeholder requests, HFSC has implemented a policy to preserve the magazine upon the firearm's collection:

- The magazine must be ejected into proper evidence packaging with limited handling
- All cartridges must remain in the magazine
 - This preserves possible evidence on the magazine
- HFSC will select a separate magazine of appropriate make and model from its reference collection to use during the NIBIN analysis

Properly packaged and sealed evidence includes:

- Protecting the evidence from loss, cross-contamination and/or deleterious change
- Tape used to seal the package (i.e. commercially available evidence tape or packaging tape) must have initials or signature placed on the seal and have some part of the initials or signature extending over the edge of the seal
- Tape must cover all openings of the evidence container
- Heat sealed plastic bags are acceptable if initials/signature are included on the seal

NIBIN Analysis

NIBIN-eligible firearms will be evaluated for possible visible blood. When found, it will be swabbed and preserved for future requested analysis.

If HFSC does not have the right magazine in its reference collection and needs the magazine to complete NIBIN testing, its latent print processors will process the submitted magazine prior to NIBIN analysis.

Firearms collected by non-HFSC personnel will not be processed for contact DNA since they are typically handled in a manner that renders them unsuitable for contact DNA. However, magazines collected by non-HFSC personnel that are properly preserved will be available for future requested analysis (such as latent prints or DNA).

Firearms analysis

Once a NIBIN notification has been issued, additional firearms analysis may be requested. Further analysis may require the use of the original magazine submitted with the firearm. Therefore, once full firearms analysis has been completed it is not possible to also perform DNA and/or latent print analysis on that item of evidence.



Consequently, DNA, latent print and other requests for analysis must be submitted at the same time as the request for firearms analysis. Requests for DNA and/or latent print analysis received after firearms analysis has begun will not be processed.

Firearms are typically entered into NIBIN within one business day following submission to the property room. Therefore, to request an exception to this policy you must both contact HFSC's triage staff and enter a request for services in the Where's My Result portal at the time that the evidence is submitted to the property room. Exceptions to this policy must be approved by HFSC's COO or designee. To request an exception to this policy, contact HFSC's triage staff at Triage@houstonforensicscience.org or 713-929-6760, and provide the following information:

Contact information: name, email, phone number

Case number

Items that need testing

Type of testing requested

Reason for exception