



# Idaho State Police

Service Since 1939



Colonel Ralph W. Powell  
Director

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Governor

## PACKAGING EVIDENCE FOR FINGERPRINT EXAMINATION

Forensic Services would like to assist you by only issuing one lab number to each of your cases. However, it is imperative that you assist us. Please be consistent when entering case numbers into pre-log and in writing the full case number on each item that is submitted to the laboratory. If your case number is 20021954, please do not abbreviate it to 02-1954. Entering the same case number two different ways may cause Forensic Services to issue it a second lab number.

For identification purposes, you will need to put the agency name, agency case number, subject name and exhibit number, if any, on each evidence envelope or individual package. The chain of custody should also be on the evidence envelope.

Please make sure that you take the time to fill out all Victim, Suspect, & Subject information with their date of birth if known and correct name spelling. If you have a SID# for a particular individual, please provide it when filling out the pre-log questions. If available, a copy of the police report should accompany evidence submitted to the Forensic Laboratory for *latent print analysis*.

**Latent Lift Cards:** latent lift cards need to be filled out completely. At a minimum, the cards should include the date lifted, the name of the person doing the lifting, a diagram of where the latent was removed from the object (an arrow showing directionality is helpful), and the case #. In the event that an identification is made to a suspect, all of this information needs to be present in order for it to be easily admitted into court. If an officer inadvertently lifts their own latent prints, please cross them out. Latent lift cards are evidence. They need to be placed into an evidence envelope, sealed with evidence tape, and have a signature placed across the seal.

**Known Fingerprints:** also known as ten print cards, palm prints, or major case prints. These are prints taken by officers for the purpose of comparing to unknown latent prints. Known fingerprints may be of the suspect or they may be for victim/elimination purposes. These prints should be dated and signed by both the official taking the prints and the person being printed (if the person being printed refuses to sign, a note should be made to that effect). Known fingerprint cards should be treated as evidence when they are being submitted to the lab. They need to be placed in an evidence envelope, sealed with evidence tape, and have a signature placed across the seal. ISP Forensic Services prefers original copies of known prints for comparison purposes. In the event that originals are not available please submit certified copies.

**Photographs of Latent Prints:** If you are sending photographs of latent prints, they should be taken with the camera perpendicular (at a 90 degree angle) to the surface being photographed. All photos must include a scale. Digital photos should be shot at as high of a resolution as possible and in TIFF format if possible.

**Tape:** Usually, it is a good idea to leave the tape on the item on which it was found, and submit the whole item. If however, you need to remove the tape and would like to have it processed for latent prints, try not to fold the tape onto itself. Obtain a piece of heavy gauge plastic (like that used to package heat sealed evidence or plastic page protectors- make note to us that they're not items of evidence) onto which you can stick the tape, so that we can peel the tape off in order to process it. If the plastic is too thin, we

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will not be able to peel the tape off without tearing the plastic. \*Remember, latent prints may be on the adhesive side of the tape.

**Plastic Baggies:** drugs *should* be removed prior to submission. Baggies can then be placed between sheets of clean white printer paper. It is all right to place multiple bags in the same evidence envelope as long as they are separated by sheets of paper. If the bags are not separated, latent prints or portions of them, may actually transfer from one bag to another. Instead of labeling baggies as “packaging”, be sure to note the quantity of baggies; if not counted, note “numerous” or “multiple”.

**Paraphernalia:** items impounded for general evidence collection should be separate from items to be processed for latent prints. Only the items that are to be processed should be submitted to the lab. If a fabric pouch containing a glass pipe, cotton swabs, and a used tissue is impounded, but only the glass pipe is to be processed, package the pipe in its own envelope for submission.

**Paper/Cardboard:** no special packaging required. Place in an evidence envelope or bag, seal, sign, and submit to the lab. Paper and cardboard SHOULD NOT be processed using fingerprint powders. Chemical techniques used by the laboratory are much more successful at recovering usable latent prints than powder processing of porous items. In the event that your agency does decide to use black powder processing on paper/cardboard, all latents should be photographed 1:1 at a 90° angle with a scale. These photographs and negatives should be submitted along with the item.

**Guns/Knives:** Firearms need to be unloaded and the chamber secured in an open position before being sent to the lab. Weapons must be secured into a cardboard box with tie downs. Please do not place them unsecured in evidence envelopes or boxes as they tend to shift around and the movement within the container destroys the latent prints. Gun cases with foam inserts are not acceptable packaging, as the foam will remove prints from the item. If your agency does decide to submit foam lined gun cases, please try placing a layer of butcher paper between the weapon and the foam.

**Containers with liquid:** If you have containers with liquid (drink cans or bottles, etc.), dump as much of the liquid out as possible, then manufacture a wick from paper toweling. Place the wick down inside the can to absorb the remainder of the liquid. (Even a little bit of liquid if left in the container may escape during transport and destroy latent prints.) Cans/bottles may be rolled in a sheet of white paper, and taped before placing in the evidence bag. This reduces friction, and allows more than one item to be placed in the same package. Items known to contain moisture should be packaged in paper bags or evidence envelopes.

**Paper Toweling is not recommended for packaging latent print evidence because:**

- 1) it is very fibrous, and the fibers may stick to the evidence,
- 2) it is textured, and the texture has a tendency to rub latent prints off
- 3) latent prints are 99% water, and paper towels are designed to absorb moisture

**\*\*Remember to write on the evidence envelope before putting the evidence inside, so that you are not creating friction or engraving your name and case information on the evidence inside.**

**\*\*\*Please note on the packaging if the evidence requires other testing such as biology screening or DNA. It is important that processing proceeds in the proper order because some of the chemicals used in the development of fingerprints may destroy DNA evidence.**

If you have any questions about collection, packaging, or casework, please do not hesitate to call the lab.

Meridian Lab (208) 884-7170.