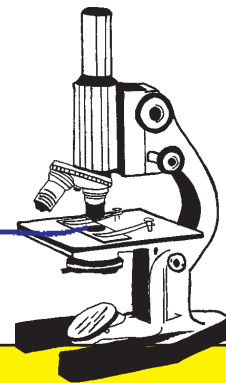


**A CURRENT  
EDUCATIONAL  
BULLETIN FOR  
SUBMITTING LAW  
ENFORCEMENT  
AGENCIES**

*A Closer Examination From The Benchtop...*

# UNDER<sup>the</sup>SCOPE



MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL • CRIME LABORATORY DIVISION

PHONE: 573-526-6134  
FAX: 573-751-9922



DO NOT SUBMIT NEEDLES USED TO DRAW BLOOD FOR TOXICOLOGY TESTING. NEEDLES ARE A SAFETY HAZARD AND ARE NOT EXAMINED BY TOXICOLOGY.

DON'T PLACE ANY AGENCY LABELS OVER BLOOD TUBE LABELS. WE MUST BE ABLE TO VERIFY INFORMATION ON THE BLOOD TUBE MANUFACTURER LABEL FOR COURT PURPOSES.

FREQUENTLY, WE HAVE REQUESTS TO PROFILE DNA ON ITEMS THAT HAVE CLEARLY BEEN TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM A SUSPECT'S BODY CAVITY OR PERSON. IF DRUGS, DRUG PARAPHERNALIA, OR DRUG CONTAINERS, ETC. ARE RECOVERED DIRECTLY FROM A PERSON, THEN DNA ANALYSIS IS USUALLY NOT NECESSARY TO PROVE WHAT THE OFFICER ACTUALLY WITNESSED (AND IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR CODIS).



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## Help Control The Drug Backlog

Over the past few years, the Drug Chemistry section of the lab has seen an increase in the number of case submissions. To keep up with our agency requests, we are continually seeking ways to increase our efficiency without sacrificing quality. Therefore, we are offering suggestions for you to assist in streamlining our laboratory processes to help us lower case turn-around time and increase productivity.

Limiting the amount of evidence submitted in a case will have a noticeable impact in the streamlining process. Many drug cases have upwards of 10-20 items. In certain instances, this amount of evidence may be necessary. Most often, though, non-probative items (items with no apparent value) are submitted, causing delays throughout the lab system, from transporting, receiving, relaying, and securing to sorting, listing, and reporting.

Submitting the best, most probative (highest value) evidence is crucial. The submitting agency has the option to collect an unlimited amount of evidence from a crime scene, but only the most applicable items should be submitted to the lab. Items with no probative value, such as driver's licenses, rolling papers, lighters, and empty plastic bags should be retained by the submitting agency. Clearly mark probable cause exhibits on the evidence containers to ensure that those items get tested. Paraphernalia items also decrease analyst productivity and will only be analyzed if no weighable amount of controlled substances is present. Hypodermic syringes with no visible amount of liquid will also not be tested, unless they are the only item in the case, due to the hazards they present to the analyst and other personnel. Furthermore, we will routinely only confirm controlled substances on one paraphernalia item per suspect.

Submissions of legally manufactured tablets and capsules have increased dramatically over the past few years, as well. If possible, submit only one whole/intact tablet or capsule (if present) of each schedule for analysis. Avoid submitting obvious, non-controlled, over-the-counter medications unless specifically necessary to the investigation. Resources, such as websites like [www.drugs.com](http://www.drugs.com), may be used to aid in the preliminary identification of tablets and capsules.

The laboratory's purpose is to provide the highest quality forensic testing possible for every one of our agencies in a timely fashion, making the most efficient use of our available resources.

With your assistance, we can accomplish this goal. Here are suggestions to consider when submitting drug evidence to the lab:

**DO NOT** submit hypodermic syringes that have no visible amount of liquid unless they are the only evidence in the investigation.

**DO NOT** submit smoking devices, spoons, or hypodermic syringes if there is already a measurable amount of marijuana or drugs in the case.

**DO NOT** submit field test kits. These test kits can leak and compromise the integrity of the evidence and present a serious health hazard to the chemist.

**DO NOT** submit potted or large, whole marijuana plants to the laboratory. Thoroughly dry, strip, and package leafy plant material in a box or paper bag.

**DO NOT** submit dirt, growing media, mushroom spores, or plant containers.

**DO NOT** package drug evidence with evidence needing analysis by another section (Firearms/Prints)

**ALWAYS** submit the most probative items of evidence to the lab first. Keep any other items in your custody until analysis is determined essential.

**ALWAYS** mark the probable cause items on the evidence container.

**ALWAYS** use packaging suitable in size for the evidence being submitted. Packages should not be tightly bound; the analysts must return items to the container and be able to seal it following examinations.

**ALWAYS** submit plant material that has been thoroughly dried. Failure to do so facilitates the development of mold. Not only does the mold make analysis more difficult, it may also change the condition of the plant material and make it unsuitable for analysis. Additionally, the inhalation of mold spores may cause respiratory problems.

**ALWAYS** advise the laboratory if any submitted items have been recovered from a body cavity, and mark the contaminated evidence with the biohazard warning label and symbol. Please clean thoroughly.

**ALWAYS** package powder samples and tablets/capsules using vials or plastic bags (without holes). If the items are pre-packaged (ex. small plastic bags of cocaine or methamphetamine ready for distribution), then the small plastic bags should be placed in a larger plastic bag or other sealable container.