



WISCONSIN STATE CRIME LABORATORIES

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WSCL Trace Evidence Submission Guidelines

Effective 05/01/2021

The Wisconsin State Crime Laboratories (WSCL) work to provide quality forensic results to assist agencies throughout Wisconsin. To be both as effective and efficient as possible, we have the following policies for all case submissions involving “trace” evidence. Trace evidence analysis entails the examination of evidence, often small or microscopic in nature, for identification or comparative purposes.

LABORATORY REQUEST DETAILS

- I. Provide a Transmittal of Criminal Evidence form and a case synopsis of the case facts, not a full police report. The case synopsis should include enough information to answer the following:
 - How the evidence relates to the crime in question;
 - Examination request details (“Paint Comparison” or “Physical Fit Analysis” is preferred over the generic “Trace Analysis”);
 - To whom the evidence belongs; and/or
 - Where and when the evidence was located/collected from.
- II. If another agency was involved in the collection of the evidence (such as DCI in fire debris/ignitable liquids submissions), please indicate on the transmittal that the report can also be released to the agency involved if appropriate.
- III. To accommodate timely results for all agencies throughout Wisconsin, WSCL generally works evidence in the order of submission. Rush requests impede the process; therefore, they will be accepted only on a limited basis. Consult with a WSCL Supervisor or Forensic Case Manager with respect to any rush request.

EVIDENCE ITEM ACCEPTANCE

Submission of items of evidence shall relate to **felony** investigations (Wis. Stat. §165.75(3)(e)).

As trace analysis covers a wide range of evidence types with a varying amount of analysis times, any evidence needed for trial should be submitted as soon as possible. The WSCL requires at least two months prior to the trial date to allow the Trace Unit time to complete its analysis. Additional time is necessary if multiple disciplines are requested.

After submission, if testing is no longer needed, that must be promptly communicated to the WSCL.

As of 04/09/2021, the Trace Unit no longer performs analysis of impression evidence (*i.e.*, fabric impression).

PACKAGING REQUIREMENTS

Upon receipt by the WSCL, evidence items must be packaged to protect them from loss, cross contamination, and/or deleterious change.

All evidence packages must be sealed and initialed prior to submission to the WSCL.

ITEM TYPE	SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS
Fire Debris/Ignitable Liquids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence submitted needs to be inside of vapor-proof packaging. This includes epoxy-lined (gray in color) or unlined paint cans, glass jars/vials, and specialty fire debris bags made of nylon. • Cans should be filled with evidence until they are no more than 75% full to allow for proper analysis.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Liquids submitted for analysis should be double packaged to prevent leakage. An example would be the liquid inside of a glass vial/jar, and then the vial/jar inside of a paint can. Evidence submitted for fire debris/ignitable liquid analysis that is not packaged appropriately may not be analyzed. Improper packaging for fire debris is anything other than paint cans, nylon bags, or glass jars/vials. Paper and plastic bags are <u>not</u> proper packaging. It is usually only necessary to submit exterior layers of clothing for analysis. In certain cases, it may be requested that a known liquid reference sample be submitted at a later date. It is the agency's responsibility to procure and submit the known liquid reference sample.
Comparison of Questioned and Known (e.g., Paint, Glass, Fibers, Tape)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should always be submitted in double packaging to prevent loss of evidence. Both questioned and known items need to be submitted to perform a comparison. Bloody/wet evidence (usually items of clothing) should be dried before being packaged to prevent deterioration of evidence. <u>Paint</u>: Collect samples as close to the area of damage as possible. All layers should be collected for analysis. <u>Fibers</u>: Preferred packaging is loosely adhering fibers to a sticky note and placing the sticky note in an envelope. Plastic packaging is <u>not</u> recommended for fibers due to static electricity issues. <u>Tape</u>: Mark cut ends and adhere to plastic sheet when possible. Do not wad or submit in paper packaging. <u>Glass</u>: Known glass should be collected from window or door frame, <u>not</u> from the ground. Double-paned glass or known glass from different sources must be packaged separately.
Explosives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The WSCL will not accept unexploded devices that have not been rendered safe. The WSCL will not accept or examine cases that contain high explosives. Submit ~1 gram of powder in a glass vial/jar for analysis. Package components separately (<i>i.e.</i>, device; wick; powder).
Physical/Chemical Determination and Comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please contact the Trace Unit before submission. Includes, but not limited to, bank dyes, building materials, determination of general unknowns, tampering cases.
Physical Match (Fracture Match)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Package to preserve broken edges. Can package according to type (<i>i.e.</i>, all red pieces, all black pieces, etc.).

Due to the varied nature of trace evidence as it relates to a case, we encourage you to call the WSCL to inquire whether analysis is possible, especially if you do not see a specific evidence type listed above.

Based on the circumstances of the case, the possibility of additional testing may be warranted. In such cases, the evidence items and testing requested should be discussed with the WSCL Forensic Case Manager for acceptance consideration.

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Any questions concerning the policy should be directed to:

Nicole Roehm, M.S.
 Administrator
 WI Division of Forensic Sciences
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Thank you for your cooperation in helping the WSCL provide consistent, quality service to agencies throughout Wisconsin. We look forward to working with you.