



LIMITED EXAMINATION CONSIDERATIONS FOR LATENT PRINT SECTIONS POSITION STATEMENT

Random sampling and limited examination programs have been in place in other forensic disciplines for some time. Recently, due to economic conditions and other factors, friction ridge examination administrators may be under pressure to implement random sampling or limited examinations.

Due to the accidental and chance reproductions of friction ridge skin on evidentiary items, there is no reliable method to determine which suitable items will bear friction ridge impressions. Likewise, given numerous latent friction ridge impressions, it is not possible to predict which impressions will be identified or excluded.

While random sampling is appropriate in some forensic disciplines, SWGFAST recommends random sampling procedures not be used for friction ridge examination. However, in some circumstances agencies may consider limited examinations as a backlog reduction mechanism, or a method to increase case throughput, or for effective resource usage. These considerations are provided to increase the work flow of friction ridge examinations while having the least negative impact on the probative value of the examination. Crime type may be a consideration for the implementation of these strategies. An agency performing limited examinations should document its policy in writing. Examples of potential limited examination techniques (in no particular order) include:

- 1) Change agency submission guidelines to, for example, requiring the submitter to separate drug packaging prior to submission for latent print examination.
- 2) Prioritize cases (i.e., base case prioritization on staffing levels or backlog status).
- 3) Develop, recover, and retain all suitable latent prints however, conclude the manual comparisons once each named suspect has been identified on the surface.
- 4) Process and examine impressions from probative items first and stop when a suspect is identified.
- 5) If a subject has been identified through AFIS, compare only the remaining AFIS quality prints to that subject. Do not conduct a full examination unless specifically requested to do so).
- 6) Conduct AFIS image searches first using auto-extraction and only proceed to feature searches using manual encoding if there are no identifications from the image searches.

- 7) Examine only AFIS candidates that score above a threshold.
- 8) Restrict the AFIS list to fewer candidates.
- 9) Restrict which databases are searched, for example, using a regional restriction.
- 10) Select optimal processing techniques instead of conducting sequential processing.
- 11) Conduct limited processing of certain items, such as cartridge cases, due to a low success rate.
- 12) Communicate with the investigator or prosecutor regarding case status to determine if the examination is still required.
- 13) Consult with relevant stakeholders to determine the extent or order of the examinations.

An agency planning to adopt a limited examination policy should notify contributors of the policy. Additionally, limited examinations shall be documented in the case report, and when applicable, will specifically include information that there were suitable latent prints that were not compared.

Any limited examination approach has the potential to adversely affect the case result. It is up to the agency to weigh risk-benefit factors in deciding whether to implement a limited examination policy.