

POLICY 40. LATENT FINGERPRINTS

A. Overview

1. Latent fingerprints are one of the most effective forensic tools available to law enforcement. Their existence often makes the difference between crime cases being classified as “workable” as opposed to “non-workable.” Good work with latent fingerprints can make the difference between identifying and charging a perpetrator with a crime, or letting him/her get away without consequence. To manage the analysis and development of latent fingerprints Department wide, field personnel are expected to adhere to the following:
 - a. Procedure
 1. In situations involving the response of an investigative unit, patrol deputies should discuss the collection of evidence with the respective investigator(s) before proceeding. In some situations, it may be more appropriate for the investigators to process the crime scene themselves.
 2. While conducting preliminary investigations, deputies will make every reasonable effort to develop latent fingerprint evidence at the crime scene and/or from recovered stolen vehicles and/or property. This includes items that are not easily or safely packaged for submission to the Crime Laboratory. In situations where the deputy does not feel comfortable or the scene conditions do not allow for the success of fingerprint collection, items that are easily and safely packaged should be submitted to the Crime Laboratory for examination.
 3. Deputies obtaining fingerprint evidence at the scene may enlist investigative personnel to assist with the fingerprinting work.
 4. In extraordinary situations, where the lifting of latent fingerprints appears particularly difficult or burdensome, a supervising criminalist may authorize Crime Lab personnel to respond or otherwise assist station personnel.
 5. Questions about latent fingerprint processing in the field can be addressed over the phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, by contacting the Communications Center and asking for the on-call forensic evidence technician to call the deputy.
 6. Objects may be submitted to the Crime Lab from patrol stations/substations for latent fingerprint development. Decisions regarding this process should be made by the deputy on scene or the case investigator. Factors to consider on whether items should be processed in the field or submitted to the Crime Laboratory should be

based upon the severity of the crime and/or series of crimes, the nature of the objects to be processed, and the complexity of the procedure necessary to develop the latent fingerprints. If items are submitted to the Crime Laboratory for latent print development, "HOLD FOR PRINTS" stickers should be applied to the packaging of the item.

7. The procedure outlined in this policy applies solely to patrol personnel and not to situations involving the activation of the Homicide Detail.