



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
A Nationally Accredited Laboratory

NOTICE OF DFS POLICY CHANGE

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To: All Agencies served by DFS

From: Linda Jackson, Department Director 

Date: June 9, 2017

RE: **“Trace” DNA (Previously Referred to as “Touch” DNA) Submission Policy Revised
(all other DNA submission policies remain unchanged and are restated below)**

Effective immediately, the Department of Forensic Science (DFS) will be changing its submission policy for “trace” DNA (previously referred to as “touch” DNA) in order to best utilize resources and serve our user agencies. “Trace” DNA evidence is that resulting from limited casual contact by an individual with a surface or material. Some examples of the types of evidence submitted for this analysis include knife or firearm grips, door handles and window frames or swabs from such items. “Trace” DNA differs from “wearer” DNA in that “wearer” DNA is recovered from an item of clothing worn by a person. Typically, the success rate of obtaining a usable DNA profile in “trace” DNA cases is approximately 15%. Some of the reasons this rate may be low include that the person wore gloves, a minimal amount of DNA was deposited on the item, the item/material was wiped or washed off or the item/material was exposed to the elements (rain, sun, dirt, water).

New “Trace” DNA Submission Policy – Effective Immediately:

DFS will no longer require the Commonwealth’s Attorney to submit a letter for “trace” DNA evidence submissions; however, only 2 items of potential “trace” DNA evidence will be analyzed for lesser felony crimes such as property crimes, drug possession and possession of a firearm by a felon. Known DNA samples from the listed suspect(s) must be submitted along with the “trace” evidence for drug/firearm/ammunition possession cases as they are not searchable in the DNA Data Bank.

Consultation with a Forensic Biology Examiner/Supervisor Required Prior to Initial Submission of Large Multi-Item Cases

The policy requiring large multi-item DNA evidence submissions to be reviewed in advance by a Forensic Biology examiner or supervisor via telephone or in-person in order to identify the most

probative evidence for the respective case remains unchanged. Evidence submission will be limited to those items deemed most probative. In the event that additional evidence submission is necessary, communication between the assigned examiner and the investigator will occur to facilitate this process. This policy has been in effect since October 12, 2004.

Written Request for Testing from Commonwealth's Attorney Required for DNA Analysis in Non Sex-Related Misdemeanor Cases

The policy that any request for DNA analysis in a non sex-related misdemeanor case will not be accepted unless accompanied by a written request for such analysis from the Commonwealth's Attorney remains unchanged. This policy has been in effect since May 14, 2002.

For questions about these policies, please contact the Forensic Biology Section Supervisor at the DFS Laboratory that provides service to your agency:

Central (Richmond) – Lisa Schiermeier-Wood 804-588-4083

Eastern (Norfolk) – Anne Pollard 757-355-5983

Northern (Manassas) – Karen Ambrozy 703-334-9743

Western (Roanoke) – Nicole Harold 540-283-5945

This Notice of DFS Policy Change supersedes the Written Request and Touch DNA Submission Policies issued May 14, 2002 and October 12, 2004, respectively.