



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR
A Nationally Accredited Laboratory

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NOTICE OF DFS POLICY CHANGE

To: All Agencies served by DFS

From: Linda Jackson, Department Director 

Date: April 2, 2018

RE: **Expanded NIBIN Search Areas and Changes to Toolmark and Distance Determination Submission Policies**

Expanded NIBIN Search Areas

The Firearms & Toolmarks Section utilizes the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to potentially associate different crimes by searching images of cartridge and shotshell cases recovered from crime scenes and test fires from submitted firearms. Effective March 27, 2018, every NIBIN case submitted to the Virginia Department of Forensic Science (VADFS) is being searched against cases entered at the following sites: VADFS, Newport News Police Department (Virginia), District of Columbia Department of Forensic Sciences, Montgomery County Police Department (Maryland), and Prince George's County Police Department (Maryland), as well as cases entered by the ATF for Zone 1. ATF Zone 1 generally includes agencies within Connecticut, District of Columbia, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Virginia, Vermont, and West Virginia, but not all agencies in these states submit cases to the ATF.

Requests for searches of entries from additional sites will be handled on a case-by-case basis in consultation with a Firearms & Toolmarks Supervisor.

Revised Toolmark and Distance Determination Submission Policies

In light of increased submissions and the backlog facing the Firearms & Toolmarks Section, the following policies have been revised, effective immediately, to best utilize DFS resources and serve our user agencies.

Toolmark Examination Submission Policy:

Evidence for toolmark examination/comparison will not be accepted unless the tool is associated with a suspect.

Distance Determination Submission Policy:

A pre-submission consultation between the investigator and/or Commonwealth's Attorney and a Firearms & Toolmarks Supervisor will be required before any evidence will be accepted for a distance determination examination. The purpose of the pre-submission consultation is to determine the scientific feasibility of the examination and ensure that all necessary evidence is submitted.

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

Central (Richmond) – Stephen Atkinson (804) 588-4141

Eastern (Norfolk) – Allison Milam (757) 355-5965

Northern (Manassas) – Cara McCarthy (703) 334-9723

Western (Roanoke) – Wendy Gibson (540) 283-5932