



# 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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "LJ", is written over the name "Linda Jackson".

Date: October 15, 2018

RE: **Administrative Sampling Plan for NIBIN Searches**

The Firearms & Toolmarks Section utilizes the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) to potentially associate criminal events through the search of digital images of cartridge cases and shotshell cases recovered from crime scenes and test fired firearms. The ATF provides guidance to NIBIN users on best practices that will result in timely investigative information. These best practices include the utilization of a triage procedure to group similar cartridge cases and enter the image of a representative cartridge case per group. In order to reduce the time it takes to provide investigative leads, effective immediately the Firearms & Toolmarks Section has implemented the following Administrative NIBIN Sampling Plan:

- For cases in which two (2) or more cartridge cases and/or shotshell cases are submitted:
  - Submitted evidence will be screened and grouped based on similar characteristics.
  - At least one (1) cartridge case and/or shotshell case representing each determined group shall be imaged.
  - Appropriate NIBIN system searches shall be conducted.
- Comparative examinations that may determine how many firearms are represented will not be performed routinely on submitted cartridge cases and/or shotshell cases.
- Projectile evidence will not be examined routinely when submitted with cartridge case and/or shotshell case evidence in the absence of a firearm.

When the Administrative NIBIN Sampling Plan is utilized, it shall be indicated on the Certificate of Analysis in a manner similar to the example below:

*The submitted cartridge cases were microscopically screened and determined to exhibit similar characteristics. The Item 1 cartridge case was entered into the NIBIN system, and a search was conducted. A potential association exists between the Item 1 submitted*

*cartridge case and the Item 7 cartridge case submitted under FS Lab # C18-000 (Richmond PD #18xxxx). For confirmation of this potential association, the evidence from both cases will need to be resubmitted. The remaining cartridge cases (Items 2-10) were not examined further.*

*No examination was conducted on the Item 11 bullet.*

Additionally, this Administrative NIBIN Sampling Plan will be applied to evidence previously submitted to the laboratory and awaiting analysis.

This Administrative NIBIN Sampling Plan allows DFS to more expeditiously enter cases into NIBIN and report any investigative leads. The Department recognizes that, in certain homicide or assault cases, testing of additional samples may be necessary. In such cases or for questions about this policy, 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