

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro***A. Purpose:**

1. To describe the procedures for the safe handling of firearms in the laboratory. Firearms evidence in the laboratory is not dangerous if handled correctly and treated with respect. All firearms shall be treated as though they are loaded until the examiner proves they are not. There are occasions when a firearm, because of its condition, cannot be unloaded before submission to the laboratory for examination. The safe handling of firearms in the laboratory corresponds directly to the safe handling of firearms in general.

**B. Responsibility:**

1. It is the responsibility of the firearms section personnel to perform these procedures to ensure the safety of individuals in the laboratory who may encounter firearms in their examination process.

**C. Safety:**

1. The use of personal protective devices is at the discretion of the examiner. The type of examination(s) requested by an agency, such as latent processing, trace material, or biological examination, will dictate the safety precautions which must be taken into consideration.
2. Take proper care when handling the firearm to ensure that it is in an unloaded condition.

**D. Procedure:**

1. All firearms being examined within the laboratory will be treated as if they are loaded.
2. The muzzle of the firearm must always be pointed in a safe direction.
3. Firearm evidence taken in by the Evidence Receiving section of the laboratory must be checked by an examiner of the Firearm and Toolmark section to make sure that it is unloaded, before it can be released to any other section.
4. The examiner conducting the safety examination must date and sign with his or her initials on the container after confirming the firearm is unloaded, and then reseal the evidence.
5. If a firearm should reach another section of the laboratory before this safety check is conducted; that section's supervisor, or the examiner, must call upon the Firearm and Toolmark section to respond and perform a safety check. The container will then be initialed and dated by the examiner of the Firearm and Toolmark section, showing that the safety check was completed.

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6. If a firearm is received loaded, and it cannot be made safe before going to another section, it must be taken to the Firearm and Toolmark section first, and rendered safe. Once the firearm is unloaded it can then be released to the appropriate section for examination.
7. Upon completion of the examination of the firearm in the Firearm and Toolmark section, the safe condition of the firearm must be established.
8. The magazine must be removed and the chamber must be checked to ensure that it is clear of any remaining ammunition.
9. After this final safety check, the firearm will be placed in its original submitted container in an unloaded condition. The container must be sealed, dated, and initialed by the examiner before it is returned to the Evidence Receiving section of the laboratory or to the submitting agency.

E. References:

1. Laboratory safety manual
2. AFTE procedural manual

F. Appropriate Appendices:

1. Appendices 1 -- Worksheets