

## IM SOP-13 Examination Reports

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro*

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**Purpose:** Examination Reports

**Responsibility:** Imprint Examiners

**Safety:** All proper personal protection equipment will be used as appropriate.

### **Procedure:**

#### **A. General**

An examination report will be completed for each case examined by the Imprints Section. The report will be saved in JusticeTrax (LIMS) and will be prepared as soon as possible after completion of the examination process. The report should be scientific, easy to read and grammatically correct.

The conclusions of the examination must be conveyed in clear, concise and accurate manner. Opinions rendered in the report will be qualified so as to express the proper weight that can be assigned to the evidence submitted for examination. Only those opinions outlined in the "Opinion Terminology" section below will be rendered.

#### **B. Basis for Opinion**

There are three (3) types of characteristics which the imprint examiner must concern himself or herself with during the examination process to render an opinion.

1. **Class Characteristics** - Those features which are general in nature and which all similar items have in common. (i.e. size, shape, general pattern or tread design, manufacturing feature, etc.). These features can also be described as intentional or unavoidable characteristics which are repeated during the manufacturing process and are shared by more than one of the same item.
2. **Individual Characteristics** - Characteristics which result when something is randomly added to or taken away from the item that either causes or contributes to making the item unique (i.e. cuts, scratches, gouges, holes, tears, rocks, etc.). They are often called accidental characteristics.
3. **Wear Characteristics** - These characteristics are normally associated with examinations involving articles of footwear and tires. Wear can be described as a continuous changing of class characteristics and certain accidental characteristics that result in individualistic features. The more extensive the wear, the more original the appearance when compared to another footwear outsole or tire tread of the same design.

### C. Opinion Terminology

1. Identification – This is the highest degree of association expressed by an footwear and tire impression examiner. The questioned impression and the known footwear or tire share agreement of class and randomly acquired characteristics of sufficient quality and quantity.
2. High Degree of Association – The questioned impression and known footwear or tire must correspond in the class characteristics of design, physical size, and general wear. For this degree of association there must also exist: (1) wear that, by virtue of its specific location, degree and orientation make it unusual and/or (2) one or more randomly acquired characteristics.
3. Association of Class Characteristics – The class characteristics of both design and physical size must correspond between the questioned impression and the known footwear or tire. Correspondence of general wear may also be present.
4. Limited Association of Class Characteristics – Some similar class characteristics were present; however, there were significant limiting factors in the questioned impression that did not permit a stronger association between the questioned impression and the known footwear or tire. These factors may include but were not limited to: insufficient detail, lack of scale, improper position of scale, improper photographic techniques, distortion or significant lengths of time between the date of the occurrence and when the footwear or tires were recovered that could account for a different degree of general wear. No confirmable differences were observed that could exclude the footwear or tire.
5. Indications of Non-Association – The questioned impression exhibits dissimilarities when compared to the known footwear or tire; however, the details or features were not sufficient to permit an exclusion.
6. Exclusion – This is the highest degree of non-association expressed in footwear and tire impression examinations. Sufficient differences were noted in the comparison of class and/or randomly acquired characteristics between the questioned impression and the known footwear or tire.
7. Lacks Sufficient Detail
  - a. No Comparison Was Conducted – The examiner determined there were no discernible questioned footwear/tire impressions or features present. This opinion applies when there is insufficient detail to conduct any comparison.

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b. A Comparison Was Conducted – The examiner determined that there was insufficient detail in the questioned impression for a meaningful conclusion. This opinion only applies to the known footwear or tire that was examined and does not necessarily preclude future examinations with other known footwear or tires.

### D. Report Contents

The report may include the following information:

1. Title
2. Name and address of the laboratory, and the location where the tests and/or calibrations were carried out, if different from the address of the laboratory
3. Unique identification of the test report (case number and page number)
4. Name and address of the submitting agency
5. Identification of the test method used
6. Description of the item(s) tested
7. Date of receipt/request
8. Name, title and signature of analyst and technical reviewer
9. Description of request for analysis
10. Results obtained

### D. Distribution

1. Original report to be maintained in case file at Evidence Receiving Unit.
2. First photocopy, with original initials, to be provided to requesting agency.
3. Second photocopy, with original initials, to be maintained in case file.

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4. With the exception of the following, additional copies of the examination report will not be provided without the expressed approval of the Agency who originally requested the examination.
  - a. A lawful subpoena.
  - b. Request from the appropriate prosecutor or States Attorney's office. (Except those cases involving examinations which were conducted at the request of the Public Defenders Office).
5. In the case of an amended or supplemental report, the report shall be uniquely identified and shall contain a reference to the original that it replaces. The distribution of the report will follow the same procedure outlined above.

### E. Retention/Storage

1. Examination case files will be stored in appropriate storage containers. These containers will be maintained and secured at the Forensic Science Laboratory facilities.
2. No examination case file(s) and/or related material(s) will be removed from the facility without the approval and knowledge of the appropriate supervisor.
3. The case file may contain the following documents:
  - a. Evidence Receipt(s)
  - b. "Request for Examination of Physical Evidence" form(s)
  - c. Worksheet(s) (QR-IM1)
  - d. Documentation of the label on the packaging of the item(s) of evidence
  - e. Photograph(s)
  - f. Copy of test impressions
  - g. Notes
  - h. Copy of the report (including amended or supplemental report if applicable)

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- i. Case Review Form (QR-IM2)
- j. Other documents as applicable
4. A backup of all digital files and pictures will be stored on the Laboratory's X Drive or on another drive/device as needed.
5. Photographs of impressions that cannot be lifted or otherwise collected will be saved to a CD or DVD. The CD or DVD will be packaged in an appropriate evidence container, tape sealed, sub-itemized in JusticeTrax, barcoded, and returned to the submitting agency along with the original evidence.

### F. Destruction

1. Any and all examination case file materials approved for destruction will be processed through appropriate electric shredders.
2. Materials which cannot be shredded will be destroyed by other approved means of destruction.

**Sources of Error:** N/A

**Quality Assurance:** N/A

**References:** See bibliography.