

**Purpose:** Examination Reports

**Responsibility:** Forensic Science Examiners assigned to the Imprints Unit are responsible to follow the guidance of this procedure.

**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. Section C of this SOP should be referenced for guidance on reporting language.

**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 or randomly acquired 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. Definitions and Reporting of Opinions

**Definition of Identification:**

This is the highest degree of association expressed by a footwear and tire impression examiner. The questioned impression and the known footwear or tire share agreement of class and randomly acquired/individual characteristics of sufficient quality and quantity.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_ is consistent in physical size, physical shape, outsole design, wear characteristics, and randomly acquired characteristics with the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_\_. This opinion is the highest degree of association that can be expressed in this type of comparison.*

**Definition of High Degree of Association:**

The questioned impression and known footwear or tire must correspond in the class characteristic 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/individual characteristics.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_ corresponds in outsole design, physical size, physical shape, wear characteristics, and \_\_\_\_ randomly acquired characteristics with the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_ and could have been made by this shoe or another shoe of the same outsole design, physical size, physical shape, wear characteristics, and randomly acquired characteristics. There is a high degree of association between this Questioned footwear impression and the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe.*

**Definition of 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.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that there is an association of class characteristics (outsole design, physical size, physical shape, and wear characteristics) between the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_ and the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_ and this Questioned footwear impression could have been made by this shoe or another shoe of the same class characteristics (physical size, physical shape, outsole design and wear characteristics). Due to the limited detail in the Questioned impression and/or lack of sufficient randomly acquired characteristics, a stronger conclusion could not be reached.*

**Definition of Limited Association of Class Characteristics:**

Some similar class characteristics are 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 are 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.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that there is a limited association of class characteristics (outsole design, physical size, physical shape, and wear characteristics) between the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_ and the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_\_. Due 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) a stronger conclusion could not be reached.*

**Definition of 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.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_ is of a different outsole design/physical size/wear characteristics than the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_\_. There are indications of non-association between the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe and the Questioned footwear impression; however, due to lack of detail in the questioned footwear impression a stronger conclusion could not be reached.*

**Definition of 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/individual characteristics between the questioned impression and the known footwear or tire.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_ is of a different outsole design/physical size/wear characteristics than the Known \_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_\_. The Known \_\_\_\_ shoe was excluded as having made the Questioned footwear impression.*

**Definition of 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.

*Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro*

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_\_ lacks sufficient detail to conduct any comparison.*

**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.

**Report Language:**

*It is the opinion of the undersigned examiners that the Questioned footwear impression in Submission \_\_\_\_\_ lacks sufficient detail for a meaningful conclusion in comparison to the Known \_\_\_\_\_ shoe in Submission \_\_\_\_\_.*

**D. Report Contents**

The report may include the following information (Note: Starred items are required per GL 18):

1. Name and address of the Division\*
2. Title\*
3. Division case number\*
4. Name and address of the submitting agency\*
5. Agency case number\*
6. Town of incident
7. Date of request\*
8. Date of report
9. Individual requesting report
10. Description of the item(s) tested\*
11. Description of request for analysis
12. Identification of the test method used\*

13. Results obtained\*

14. Disposition of the evidence

15. Opinion/conclusion statement:\*

16. Name, title and signature of analyst and technical reviewer\*

**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.
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).
  - c. FOIA requests which will be handled by Division of Scientific Services Administration
5. In the case of an amended 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 previously.
6. In the case of a supplemental report, the report shall be uniquely identified. The distribution of the report will follow the same procedure outlined previously.

**E. Retention/Storage**

1. Examination case files will be stored in appropriate storage containers. These containers will be maintained and secured at the Division of Scientific Services facilities.

**IM SOP-13 Examination Reports**

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Page 6 of 7

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 will contain all pertinent information to support the findings, these may include:
  - a. Evidence Receipt(s)
  - b. Request 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)
  - i. Draft report(s)
  - j. Case Review Form (QD-IM QR1)
  - k. Other documents as applicable
4. A backup of all digital files and pictures will be stored on one of the Laboratory's backed up drives or on another drive/device as needed. Additionally, a CD or DVD will be created containing the digital case file. This CD or DVD will be packaged in an appropriate evidence container, tape sealed, sub-itemized in JusticeTrax, barcoded, and transferred to "QD/IM Archive Storage".
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.

**Sources of Error:** N/A

**Quality Assurance:** N/A

**References:** GL 1 Quality Manual

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Page 7 of 7

GL 13 General Evidence Handling

GL 18 Case Reviews

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