

QD SOP-12 Procedure for Examination of Rubber Stamp Impressions

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Page 1 of 4

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

Purpose: Procedure for Examination of Rubber Stamp Impressions

These procedures focus on the methods that should be used by forensic document examiners for examinations and comparisons involving rubber stamps and their impressions. These procedures should assist the forensic document examiner to reliably reach an opinion concerning whether two or more impressions have a common origin or if a rubber stamp impression was created by a specific rubber stamp. The particular methods used in a given case will depend upon the nature and sufficiency of the material available for examination. These procedures may not cover all aspects of particularly unusual or uncommon examinations.

Some evidence items submitted for examination may have inherent limitations that can interfere with the procedures in this standard. Limitations should be noted and recorded.

Limitations can be due to submission of non-original documents, limited quantity or comparability, or condition of the items submitted for examination (for example, impressions made with over-inked or inadequately inked stamps, partially imprinted impressions, or variations in surface texture).

Prior storage, handling, testing, or chemical processing (for example, for latent prints) can interfere with the examination of certain characteristics. Whenever possible, document examinations should be conducted prior to any chemical processing. Items should be handled appropriately to avoid compromising subsequent examinations.

Consideration should be given to the possibility that a rubber stamp can be manufactured which duplicates the impressions of another stamp, and that various forms of simulations, imitations, and duplicates of rubber stamps or rubber stamp impressions can be generated by computer and other means.

Responsibility:

Forensic Science Examiners assigned to the Questioned Documents Unit or performing casework in the Unit

Equipment:

1. Lighting (natural, fluorescent) and alternate light sources or fiber optic lighting systems. Lighting may include the use of transmitted, side or vertical lighting to improve the ability to view fine details.
2. Stereomicroscopes with fiber-optic lighting
3. Electrostatic Detection Apparatus

**State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection
Division of Scientific Services**

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Page 2 of 4

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4. Measuring devices
5. Scanners
6. Cameras
7. A stamp pad, stamp pad ink and adequate smooth (bond) paper or other suitable substrate to collect specimens from the rubber stamp if available.

Procedure:

1. Examine subject document(s) using oblique illumination and photograph any visible indented impressions and/or image. In some instances, the use of side lighting in a room with subdued light may provide better visualization of indentations.

Document any indentations observed on the QR DOC-2 or case notes. If indentations are not observed, document the lack of visible indentations.

At various points in these procedures, a determination that a particular feature is not present or that an item is lacking in quality or comparability may indicate that the examiner should discontinue or limit the procedure(s). It is at the discretion of the examiner to discontinue the procedure at that point and report accordingly or to continue with the applicable procedures to the extent possible. The reasons for such a decision shall be documented on the QR DOC-2 or case notes.

2. Determine whether the submitted Questioned impression(s) were produced by a rubber stamp. If not a rubber stamp impression (original or copy), discontinue examination and report accordingly.

Examination of the original is preferable, and consideration should be given to obtaining the original, if not submitted.

3. Determine whether the examination is a comparison of Questioned impressions; a comparison of a Questioned impression(s) with a Known impression(s); or a comparison of a Questioned impression(s) with a rubber stamp(s).

4. Determine whether the submitted Questioned impression(s) is suitable for comparison. If it is not suitable for comparison, discontinue the procedure and report accordingly. Factors that affect the suitability include clarity, detail, degree of inking or condition of the document.

Limited sufficiency and comparability of the impressions can be a restrictive factor in an examination and its conclusions but does not necessarily require the discontinuation of the examination.

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Document ID: 2191
Revision: 1
Effective Date: 1/4/2016
Status: Retired
Page 3 of 4

Approved by Director: Dr. Guy Vallaro

5. If a Known document(s) is submitted, determine whether the Known document(s) is suitable for examination, or comparison, or both. If it is not suitable, discontinue the procedure and report accordingly in the case notes and in the report. Factors that affect the suitability include clarity, detail, or condition of the document.
6. If the original is not submitted, evaluate the quality of the best available reproduction to determine whether significant details have been reproduced with sufficient clarity for comparison purposes and proceed to the extent possible. If the reproduction is not of sufficient clarity for comparison purposes, discontinue these procedures and report accordingly.
7. If a rubber stamp(s) is submitted, its condition should be noted (for example, clean, dirty, inked, worn, damaged). When applicable, class characteristics (for example, typeface design and size) should be noted in the case notes. Consideration may be given to sampling ink from the stamp prior to taking exemplars. If samples of ink are required, the examiner should consult with the Deputy Director of the Chemistry Section to determine the best sampling method.
8. When producing an exemplar, note any visible features that reproduce on the impression. Prepare appropriate specimens, as needed.
9. Determine if any of the Known specimen impressions are suitable for comparison. If none of the Known specimen impressions are suitable for comparison and no others are obtained, discontinue these procedures and report accordingly.
10. If the Known specimens are suitable for comparison, conduct a side-by-side comparison of the Questioned impressions, or the Questioned impression to the Known impressions and/or to the rubber stamp(s).
11. Compare class characteristics (for example, size, type style, text, shape). If different, discontinue and report accordingly.
12. If the class characteristics lead the examiner to continue with the analysis, compare individualizing characteristics in common such as wear and damage defects, reproducible blemishes, impression voids, improper and extraneous inking, or coincidental peripheral printing.
13. Evaluate similarities, differences, and limitations. Determine their significance individually and in combination. Once all the evaluations are completed, the examiner should have enough information to reach a conclusion and report accordingly.

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Page 4 of 4

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14. The examiner may report the following conclusions:

- 1) **Identification**—When the examination reveals no significant, inexplicable differences between two or more items, and there is agreement in all individualizing characteristics, an identification is appropriate. This conclusion is used when there are no differences and no limitations associated with absent characters; and any possibility of a duplicate rubber stamp can be eliminated.
- 2) **Elimination**—If significant, inexplicable differences between two or more items are found at any level of the analyses, an elimination is appropriate.
- 3) **Qualified Opinions**—When there are limiting factors and the examination reveals similarities or differences of limited significance between two or more items, the use of qualified opinions can be appropriate (that is, the impressions or observed features contain limited similarities or differences; or limitations associated with absent characters, individualizing characteristics, or distorted impressions are present; or limitations associated with the possibility of the existence of a duplicate rubber stamp; or a combination of these). This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors in the report.
- 4) **No Conclusion/Inconclusive**—When there are significant limiting factors, and the examination reveals no significant differences, a report that no conclusion can be reached is appropriate (that is, the impressions or observed features contain insufficient significant similarities and insufficient differences). This opinion requires explanation of the limiting factors.

Sources of Error: Not applicable

References:

SWGDOC Standard for Examination of Rubber Stamp Impressions ver. 2013-1