



# HANDBOOK of FORENSIC SERVICES

## Introduction

The purpose of the Handbook of Forensic Services is to provide guidance and procedures for safe and efficient methods of collecting and preserving evidence and to describe the forensic examinations performed by the FBI Laboratory.

### FBI Laboratory Services

The successful investigation and prosecution of crimes requires, in most cases, the collection, preservation, and forensic analysis of evidence. Forensic analysis of evidence is often crucial to demonstrations of guilt or innocence.

The FBI Laboratory is one of the largest and most comprehensive forensic laboratories in the world. Services of the Laboratory are available to

- FBI Field Offices and Legal Attachés;
- U.S. Attorneys, military tribunals, and other federal agencies for civil and criminal matters; and
- All state, county, and municipal law enforcement agencies in the United States and territorial possessions for criminal matters.

All Laboratory services, including expert witness testimonies, are rendered free of cost, but the following limitations apply:

- No examination will be conducted on evidence that has been previously subjected to the same type of examination. Exceptions may be granted when there are reasons for a reexamination. These reasons should be explained in separate letters from the director of the laboratory that conducted the original examination, the prosecuting attorney, and the investigating agency.

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- No request for an examination will be accepted from laboratories having the capability of conducting the examination. Exceptions may be made upon approval of the FBI Laboratory's Assistant Director or his designee.
- No testimony will be furnished if testimony on the same subject and in the same case is provided for the prosecution by another expert.
- No request for an examination will be accepted from a nonfederal law enforcement agency in civil matters.

## **Violent Crime Versus Property Crime**

The FBI Laboratory accepts evidence related to all crimes under investigation by FBI Field Offices. The FBI Laboratory accepts only evidence related to violent crime investigations from state and local law enforcement agencies. The Laboratory does not routinely accept evidence in cases involving property crimes from state and local law enforcement agencies unless there was personal injury or intent to cause personal injury. These guidelines help to ensure that the FBI Laboratory continues to provide timely forensic assistance to law enforcement agencies investigating crimes of violence or threatened violence. Additional restrictions may be imposed on case acceptance to achieve this goal.

At the discretion of the FBI Laboratory's Assistant Director or his designee, the Laboratory may accept evidence from property crime cases. Such exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should not be regarded as setting a precedent for future case acceptance. All accepted cases will be afforded the full range of forensic services provided by the FBI Laboratory.

The following are examples of property crimes that are not routinely accepted for examinations:

- Arson of unoccupied residential and commercial buildings and property;
- Explosive incidents and hoaxes targeting unoccupied residential and commercial buildings and property;
- Vandalism and malicious mischief directed toward residential or commercial buildings and property;
- Nonfatal traffic accidents involving speedometer and headlight examinations except in cases involving law enforcement and government officials;
- Hit-and-run automobile accidents not involving personal injury;
- Auto theft except auto theft rings or carjackings;
- Breaking and entering;
- Burglary;
- Minor theft (under \$100,000); and

- Minor fraud (under \$100,000).

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