



ATF-LS-FD Introduction	Published Online: March 2018
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The ATF Laboratories' Quality Program includes technical operational guidelines for each discipline area. These guidelines were established by ATF laboratory employees, specific to each discipline. The format for the Methods of Analysis, as well as guidelines for developing and maintaining the documents, is laid out in **ATF-LS-5.4 (Test Methods – Method Validation)**. While the Deputy Assistant Director, Forensic Services has the overall responsibility for quality assurance in the laboratory system, technical leaders will be charged with maintaining the technical accuracy of the documented Methods of Analysis related to his/her discipline.

These Methods of Analysis are to be the standard for all ATF Examiners performing Fire Debris Analysis. As with most scientific methods, allowance for variation from prescribed methods is sometimes necessary. Variation from any of these procedures will be clearly documented in case notes and verified by technical and administrative reviews. All other case record and case record review guidelines are explained in **ATF-LS-4.13.2 (Case Records)** and **ATF-LS-5.9.4A (Review of Case Records, Reports, and Notifications)**, respectively.

The following Standard Approach is intended to serve as a general outline for a sequence of examinations for the analysis of fire debris. Many factors, including the observations of the debris samples submitted, allow the skilled ATF Fire Debris Examiner to enter the various protocols at alternate points. Not all of the tests listed in the scheme will be required for every examination and other unlisted tests may be applicable. No conclusion is reached in the vacuum of the analytical laboratory and certainly not without all pertinent facts.