



ATF-LS-FT12 Trace Evidence Preservation and Collection	Published Online: March 2018
Authority: Technical Leader	
Unofficial Copy; May Not Be Most Current Version	Page: 1 of 1

I. Scope

A procedure for collecting and preserving trace evidence on firearm and toolmark related items submitted for examination is necessary to ensure the integrity of said evidence. The manner of collection is varied and specific to the types of trace evidence being collected. These guidelines provide broad guidelines for these procedures. These standards are applicable to all ATF Forensic Laboratories of the Laboratory Services Division. Each examiner should possess general knowledge in the recognition, collection and preservation of trace evidence. NOTE: An examiner proficient in the recognition, collection and preservation of trace evidence should perform these functions.

II. References

Haag, L. "Trace Evidence Considerations Associated with Firearms Evidence: Evidentiary and Reconstructive Aspects," NWAFFS, April 23, 1996.

III. Safety Precautions

See ATF-LS-FT8 Firearms Safety Guidelines.

IV. Apparatus/Reagents

Various tools for the collection and preservation, packaging of trace evidence, suitable for the evidence collected, will be required.

V. Procedures

- A person knowledgeable in the recognition, collection and preservation of trace evidence may remove and preserve said trace evidence.
- In circumstances where a knowledgeable trace person is not available, and/or the trace material is not securely attached or is in danger of being lost, preserve the item of evidence as is until a knowledgeable trace person is available.

VI. Quality Control

Trace evidence is easily compromised by improper handling or packaging. Care must be taken in the handling, preservation and recording of trace evidence.