



U.S. Department of Justice
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,
Firearms and Explosives
Office of the Director

Washington, DC 20226

October 2, 2026

MEMORANDUM TO: Deputy Director
Assistant Director, Field Operations
Assistant Director, Enforcement Programs and Services
Chief Counsel
Associate Assistant Director, Field Operations
All Deputy Assistant Directors, Field Operations
All Deputy Assistant Directors, Enforcement Programs and Services
All Special Agents in Charge

FROM: Director

SUBJECT: Updated NICS Alert Policy

In April 2025, Special Agents in Charge (SACs) approval and Deputy Assistant Director (DAD) concurrence was mandated for all NICS alerts. NICS alerts may only be utilized in cases involving suspected violations of federal firearm statutes, in accordance with 28 C.F.R. Part 25. This investigative technique should not be utilized to primarily investigate state firearm laws.

This memo provides updates to the April 2025 NICS Alert Policy memo and should be utilized to detail the new process for entering NICS alerts. While the overall process is the same, NICS alerts are now automated through ATF's Case Management System (CMS).

Effective immediately, Special Agents shall utilize the 'I Want To' feature in the (CMS) for NICS Alert requests, including initiation, renewal, and withdrawal.

- **Initiate NICS Alert Request:** Allows the agent to complete and submit a request for a NICS Alert.
- **Renew NICS Alert:** Allows the agent to request an extension for an active NICS Alert prior to expiration.
- **Withdraw NICS Alert:** Allows the agent to remove an active or pending NICS Alert prior to expiration.

The CMS will guide agents through each step of the workflow process. Agents must identify if the NICS alert has been previously submitted outside of the CMS. If yes, agents will enter the total amount of monitored days for all prior NICS alerts.

Agents shall provide clear, concise, and sufficient details about the investigation. Important details to include are:

- Dates of offenses, i.e. when did the suspicious purchases occur
- Number of firearms involved
- Time to crime for recovered firearms and notable trace results
- Date of last known purchase
- Statements made by the subject and any witnesses, including statements to the FFL
- Dates of previous NICS Alerts and the results
- When grand jury/indictment is scheduled and other USAO action impacting the case
- Any additional details that are important for the reviewer in deciding whether to approve your request for a NICS Alert.
- How and when did the subject come to the attention of law enforcement
- How is the subject violating the law
- Are there co-conspirators
- If the subject is a straw purchaser, to whom is he providing the firearms
- Other details helpful to the reviewer

NICS Alert requests of 180 days or less will be routed through the requesting agent's chain of command to the respective DAD for final approval and may be routed through the Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) if the DAD determines additional review is warranted. Upon OCC review, the request will be routed back to the DAD for final approval.

NICS Alert requests of 180 days or greater will be routed through the requesting agent's chain of command and Office of Chief Counsel to the Assistant Director of Field Operations. Upon AD review, the request will be routed to the Deputy Director for final approval.

Once a NICS Alert request has received final approval, the alert will be entered in the LEEP portal by the requesting agent.

ATF has coordinated with the FBI NICS External Services Unit / NICS Alert Service Team to ensure that NICS Alerts will discontinue on their expiration date unless a renewal or extension is received beforehand.

These updated procedures are designed to strengthen accountability, improve investigative efficiency, and ensure that NICS Alerts are used only in cases where they meaningfully support federal firearm investigations. By following the revised workflow and providing complete, accurate information, agents help maintain the integrity of this vital investigative tool and support ATF's mission to prevent violent crime and firearm trafficking. If you have questions or require assistance with the new process, please contact your chain of command or the ATF Case Management System support team.

ROBERT
CEKADA

Digitally signed by
ROBERT CEKADA
Date: 2026.10.02
07:48:14 -04'00'

Robert Cekada