Evidence Submission Requirements
for the Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences
Crime Laboratory Testing Services

- Drug Chemistry
- Forensic Genetics
- Forensic Toxicology
- Trace Evidence (GSR / Fire Debris / Paint)
- Firearms Identification
Evidence Submission
Locations & Times
Evidence Submission Times

Most evidence can be submitted to the Institute 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- The following evidence must only be submitted during regular business hours:
  - Firearms
  - Fire Debris
  - Liquid Evidence (exception: blood tubes)
  - Oversized Evidence
Ways to Submit Evidence

**Normal Business Hours**

Monday – Friday
8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

At:
1861 Old Spanish Trail
2450 Holcombe (DNA evidence only)

**After Hours**

Holidays and weekends, and between 5 p.m. and 8 a.m.

Exceptions: Firearms, Fire Debris, Liquid Evidence and Bulk Evidence can not be submitted after-hours

When submitting afterhours, Evidence Screeners will review the submission form and evidence packaging to ensure proper submission
1861 OST Contributor Entry Gate

Entry Gate Call Box

Evidence/Delivery Entrance
Submission During Regular Business Hours
Monday – Friday | 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

DNA Evidence
Harris County Institute of Forensic Sciences – Forensic Genetics Laboratory Evidence Reception
2450 Holcombe Blvd., Suite 7, Houston, TX 77021
(Located on the John P. McGovern Campus of the Texas Medical Center®)
Afterhours (DNA) Submissions
(Evenings, weekends and on Harris County holidays)

NOTE: All Submission locations are secured and monitored
Afterhours Submitters

Evidence will not be tested unless ALL Submission Requirements are met

- If on duty, Evidence Screening Personnel must review and approve Submission Forms and packaging

- The Screener will require any corrections to be made before you place the evidence in the drop box
Evidence Submission Criteria
Evidence Submission Criteria

Proper evidence submission ensures a safe and timely start for lab analysis

**Evidence Must be:**

- Packaged
- Sealed
- Labeled
- Accompanied by a completed Evidence Submission Form

If evidence is submitted incorrectly, the Institute’s staff will contact you to correct it.
Evidence Submission Criterion #1:

*Evidence should be packaged in a container best suited for safety and maintaining the integrity of the evidence*

Must be deemed safe before it will be accepted
Evidence Submission Criterion #1 (cont’d):

**Drug, DWI Blood Tubes, Trace Evidence**
- Paper or plastic
- Proper seals on packaging

**DNA Evidence**
- Paper
- Evidence must be dried before submission
Evidence Submission Criterion #1 (cont’d):

**Paint Chips**
- Paint chips, or clothing with paint evidence, can be submitted in paper or plastic
- Do not submit paint chips on tape lifts

**Fire Debris**
- Metal Cans w/ lids and proper headspace – no more than half the container should be filled

Fire Debris can only be submitted during regular business hours.
Evidence Submission Criterion #1 (cont’d):

**Firearms Evidence**

- Place a zip tie through the action (magazine well or with cylinder open)
- Must be deemed safe before it will be accepted

Firearms can only be submitted during regular business hours.
Firearms Evidence

- Seal within a package/container that permits clear viewing of all items
- Package ammunition separately from firearm
- BB/Pellet/Air guns must conform to the same packaging and safety requirements as ordinary firearms

Firearms can only be submitted during regular business hours.
Evidence Submission Criterion #1 (cont’d):

Special Considerations – Syringes & Sharps

- Includes: Blades, Needles, Glass

- Must be submitted in puncture-resistant containers
Submit only stubs for GSR testing

- Swabs, clothing, and other items will not be analyzed
Evidence Submission Criterion #1 (cont’d):

**Special Considerations – Liquid Evidence (except blood tubes in DUI/DWI packaging)**

- Top of container must be sealed with tape
- Evidence must be double bagged
- Cannot be submitted in the after-hours lockers

*Liquid evidence can only be submitted during regular business hours.*
Evidence Submission Criterion #1 (cont’d):

**Special Considerations – Wet Evidence**

- All evidence must be dried at the agency before submitting to the HCIFS Lab
Evidence Submission Criterion #2:

**Evidence Must be Sealed**

- A proper seal can be achieved by using one or a combination of the following:
  - Heat Seal
  - Tape Seal
Evidence Submission Criterion #2 (cont’d):

**Evidence Must be Sealed**

A proper seal is achieved when:

1. The contents of the packaging cannot readily escape

2. Tampering with the packaging results in the obvious damage and alteration to the package and/or its seal

3. All openings and seams need to be taped over and initialed (initials should extend over the tape and packaging)
Evidence Submission Criterion #3:

**Evidence Must be Labeled:**

- After sealing the evidence, the person that sealed it must write their initials across **BOTH** the seal and packaging.

- Evidence must also be labeled with:
  - Name of the submitting agency
  - Case Number/Offense Number

Barcode containing the information above may be used (required for HCSO/Constables), as an alternative to writing the information.
Evidence Submission Criterion #4: 

Evidence Must Be Accompanied by an Evidence Submission Form:

- You may obtain an Evidence Submission Form from:
  - The Institute’s evidence staff during regular business hours
  - At the Institute’s after-hours locations
  - Your agency’s duty office
  - Download it from the Institute’s Evidence Testing and Submission web page
Special Evidence Considerations
Special Evidence Considerations

- Refrigeration Required:
  - Sexual Assault Kits
  - Biological Specimen Kit
  - Vials of blood
  - Urine

- Ensure samples are refrigerated prior to submission

- Clothing and DNA Swabs do not require refrigeration
Special Evidence Considerations – Drug Evidence

- **Bulk Evidence:**
  - **Marijuana** – no more than 100 lbs.
  - **Other Substances** – No more than 20 kilos

- If the weight exceed the above mentioned amounts, core sampling will be performed by lab personnel at an off-site location.
Special Evidence Considerations

Properly Secured Firearm Examples

Tube fed firearms: Remove tube assembly
Special Evidence Considerations

Properly Secured Firearm Examples

Tube fed firearms: Zip tie through the action
Special Evidence Considerations

Properly Secured Firearm Examples

Use a thick zip tie and then slowly ride the bolt rearward.
Special Evidence Considerations

Properly Secured Firearm Examples

Zip tie through the action and magazine

Zip tie around the back of the cylinder to keep it open
Evidence Submission Forms

**FEF.018**
For DNA Submissions Only

**FEF.006**
For all submissions other than DNA. This form is also for blood (DWI)

[Links: https://ifs.harriscountytx.gov/Pages/EvidenceSubmissionAndTesting.aspx]
Common Nonconformities
Common Nonconformities

- Not sealed properly (not all seams/entrances sealed)

- Bag sealed, but no initials over the seal and bag

- Information on evidence packaging does not match chain/items being submitted
  - Missing or wrong information on Chain of Custody – Suspect name and date of birth, submitting agency information, date of offense, type of analysis requested
For assistance or for more information contact:

**Forensic Evidence Section**

1861 Old Spanish Trail: 2450 Holcombe (DNA):

(832) 927-5291  (832) 927-5383

Calls are answered Monday through Friday, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., with the exception of Harris County holidays.

Additional information available at:

[ifs.harriscountytx.gov/Pages/EvidenceSubmissionAndTesting.aspx](http://ifs.harriscountytx.gov/Pages/EvidenceSubmissionAndTesting.aspx)