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June 10, 2016

Tom McBride, Executive Secretary  
Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys  
206 10th Avenue, SE  
Olympia, WA 98501

RE: Crime Lab Processing of Fired Cartridge Casings

Dear Mr. McBride:

I would appreciate your assistance with notifying your members about some new developments regarding the laboratory analysis of fired cartridge casings. We have discussed these developments with many of our clients and stakeholders over the past months, and I want to ensure that the new information reaches everyone.

Fired cartridge casings rarely provide "touch DNA" evidence that will support interpretable or CODIS-eligible profiles. The same is true for latent fingerprints that are suitable for comparison. Fired cartridge casings do often provide information that is most useful for IBIS correlations and, in cooperation with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), we seek to enter them into IBIS within 72 hours of collection. This is not possible if they are first processed for DNA or latent prints.

I would like for our clients to be mindful of these issues when they consider submission of fired cartridge casings to the lab. If the casings come to DNA or Latent Prints, then we will encourage submission for IBIS entry instead. Of course, each case is different and, as always, discussions between investigators, prosecutors, and forensic scientists will ultimately determine the most appropriate courses of action.

Thanks for your assistance with distributing this information to your members. I hope to hear from them with any questions they might have, or if I can provide any further information. My email is [james.tarver@wsp.wa.gov](mailto:james.tarver@wsp.wa.gov), and my direct line is 206-262-6050.

Yours truly,

James A. Tarver  
Crime Laboratory Division Commander

Cc: Director Larry Hebert, Forensic Laboratory Services Bureau  
Hon. David McEachran, Forensic Investigation Council

