FEU01 – SOP for Safe Handling of Firearms

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1. Scope

1.1. This standard operating procedure outlines the proper sequence for rendering weapons safe upon arrival at the Firearms Examination Unit.

2. Background

2.1. To establish the practices for safe handling of firearm evidence to conform to the requirements of the Department of Forensic Sciences (DFS) Forensic Science Laboratory (FSL) *Quality Assurance Manual*, the accreditation standards under ISO/IEC 17025:2005, and any supplemental standards.

3. Safety

3.1. Eye and ear protection must be worn at all times.

3.2. Treat every firearm as if it were loaded, and always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction.

4. Materials Required

4.1. Materials include, but are not limited to, the bullet recovery tank; Forensic Buddy Bullet Recovery System, FEU indoor range; eye and ear protection, cleaning rod or dowel rod, and Remote Firing Cart.

5. Standards and Controls

5.1. Not applicable

6. Calibration

6.1. Not applicable

7. Procedures

7.1. Arrival of Firearm(s) to the Firearms Examination Branch

7.1.1. All safety checks shall be conducted at the FEU indoor range, and firearms shall always be pointed down range.

7.1.2. All firearms arriving to the FEU shall have an initial safety examination/inspection conducted prior to the handling of the weapon. A firearm shall be considered loaded until an FEU member examines/inspects the weapon(s).

7.1.3. All firearms when at the FEU Laboratory shall be pointed in a safe direction and fingers shall be off the trigger and outside the trigger guard.

7.2. Firearms Safety Examination

7.2.1. Revolver – The following shall be conducted:

7.2.1.1. Open cylinder, check all chambers

7.2.1.2. Remove any cartridges/cartridge cases

7.2.1.3. Visually and physically inspect the chamber(s)

7.2.1.4. Visually inspect the bore for obstructions

7.2.2. Pistol - The following shall be conducted:

7.2.2.1. Engage safety and REMOVE THE MAGAZINE if present

7.2.2.2. Open action and visually and physically inspect the chamber

7.2.2.3. Remove any cartridges/cartridge cases remaining in the chamber

7.2.2.4. Visually inspect bore for obstructions

7.2.3. Shotgun - The following shall be conducted:

7.2.3.1. Engage manual safety, if available

7.2.3.2. Remove magazine, if present

7.2.3.3. Magazine tubes shall be visually and physically inspected to ensure the absence of shotshells

7.2.3.4. Open action and lock open, if possible

7.2.3.5. Visually and physically inspect the chamber

7.2.3.6. Press on magazine follower with finger to ensure that no shotshells remain in magazine tube

7.2.3.7. Visually inspect bore for obstructions

7.2.4. Rifle - The following shall be conducted:

7.2.4.1. Engage safety and REMOVE THE MAGAZINE, if present

7.2.4.2. Magazine tubes shall be visually and physically inspected to ensure the absence of ammunition

7.2.4.3. Open action and lock open if possible

7.2.4.4. Visually and physically inspect the chamber and magazine well and remove any cartridges/cartridge cases remaining in chamber or in magazine tube

7.2.4.5. If present, engage manual safety if action is to be closed

7.2.5. *BB/Pellet weapons* - The following shall be conducted:

7.2.5.1. Engage safety and remove magazine, if present

7.2.5.2. Open action and lock open, if possible

7.2.5.3. Visually and physically inspect the chamber and magazine well area and remove any bb/pellets

7.3. NO LOADED firearms shall be in the receiving area of the FEU Laboratory.

7.4. If a LOADED firearm arrives to the FEU Laboratory or it is determined that a firearm is loaded it shall be IMMEDIATELY taken by an FEU member to the FEU indoor range and rendered safe.

7.5. When it is determined that a Black Powder firearm is loaded it shall be immediately taken by an FEU member to the FEU indoor range and rendered safe.

7.6. **Extreme Caution shall be used**:

7.6.1. The firearm shall be always be pointed down range. The firearm shall be dipped in water for a period of time to ensure the powder is completely moist and will no longer ignite. Only then shall the FEU member attempt to remove the lead projectile(s). Again Extreme Caution shall be used when attempting to remove the projectile(s).

7.7. Any rifle, shotgun, handgun or BB/Pellet weapon which is brought into the FEU Laboratory damaged or in poor condition that prevents opening the action shall be inspected / checked or examined with ***Extreme Caution*** *at the FEU indoor range. The chamber/barrel shall be inspected/checked or examined with a tool(s) which can assist the FEU member,* i.e., a cleaning rod or dowel rod. The tool shall be used to ensure that the chamber/barrel is clear. **Extreme Caution shall be used when inserting a cleaning rod or dowel rod into the barrel, this tool shall never be PUSHED against the chamber to avoid any accidental discharge.**

7.8. FEU members should wash thoroughly after handling any firearm., [If no washing facilities are available, shooters must use wet wipes to clean hands prior to exiting range.]

8. Sampling

8.1. Not applicable

9. Calculations

9.1. Not applicable

10. Uncertainty of Measurement

10.1. Not applicable

11. Limitations

11.1. Not applicable

12. Documentation

12.1. Submission documentation provided by outside agency

12.2. Test Fire Certificate

13. References

13.1. Mathews, J.H., Firearms Identification, Vols. I-III, Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, IL (1962)

13.2. Gunther, J.D., and Gunther, C.O., The Identification of Firearms, John Wiley, New York (1935)

13.3. FSL Health and Safety Manual

13.4. Cyber National, Inc., Bullet Recovery System & Remote Firing Platform Operating Guide (2004)

13.5. Forensic Science Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual (Current Version)

13.6. FSL Departmental Operations Manuals (Current Versions)

13.7. FSL Laboratory Operations Manuals (Current Versions)

13.8. Forensic Buddy, Savage Arms Operating Guide, (2008)