



COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

DEPARTMENT OF FORENSIC SCIENCE

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DFS POLICY NOTICE

TO: All Agencies Served by DFS
FROM: Linda C. Jackson, Department Director *Linda C. Jackson*
DATE: February 27, 2025
RE: Firearms and Toolmarks Case Prioritization, Backlog, and Turnaround Times

Due to current staffing shortages resulting from recent staff turnover and the training of new scientists, the Department of Forensic Science (DFS) does not have sufficient examination capacity in its Firearms & Toolmarks Section to timely process its caseload. This has resulted in a higher case backlog and longer case turnaround times (TAT), with 157 days being the average TAT for cases completed in January 2025. In addition, comparison cases can include dozens of bullets and cartridge cases, requiring a significant amount of examination time.

DFS Firearms and Toolmarks staff are doing their best to respond to requests to expedite specific cases but given the high volume of expedited requests recently experienced, staff are not able to fulfill all of those received. Cases will be prioritized based on the following factors in the following order:

- (1) public safety concerns,
- (2) juveniles held in secure detention,
- (3) violent crimes based on speedy trial dates,
- (4) violent crimes based on set trial dates, and
- (5) all other cases.

Law enforcement will be asked to triage comparison requests to focus on those items of evidence that are essential to the case.

Law enforcement should be aware that comparison examinations that will be needed for trial or other purposes (e.g., to support a direct indictment) should be submitted to DFS as early as possible. All Certificates of Analysis reporting potential NIBIN associations should be reviewed on receipt to ensure that firearms evidence is resubmitted in a timely fashion for any required comparison analyses. Contact the Firearms Section Supervisor prior to submission to determine the necessity for a confirmation for any potential NIBIN association. **DFS will not be able to expedite those cases that are submitted on the eve of trial due to an oversight by the investigating law enforcement agency.**

For additional information or to notify your regional laboratory regarding a speedy trial or trial date for a firearms case, please contact the Firearms and Toolmarks Section Supervisor:

Laboratory	Supervisor	Phone	Email
Central (Richmond)	Stephen Atkinson	(804) 588-4141	stephen.atkinson@dfs.virginia.gov
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