

AURORA POLICE DEPARTMENT

DIRECTIVES MANUAL

08.47 COMPREHENSIVE COLLECTION OF FIREARMS AND CARTRIDGE CASINGS

Approved By:	Heather Morris, Interim Chief of Police
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Review Authority:	Professional Standards and Training Division Chief and APD Legal Advisor(s)

8.47.01 PURPOSE

The Aurora Police Department (APD), in partnership with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), participates in the National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) Program. The NIBIN Program automates ballistics evaluations and provides actionable investigative leads in a timely manner. In order to adhere to the NIBIN Program participation requirements, this directive gives guidance to members of the APD on the collection of firearms and cartridge casings.

8.47.02 SCOPE

This directive applies to all members of the APD.

8.47.03 POLICY

The APD is committed to effectively utilizing NIBIN as a valuable investigative tool. Timely entry, proper packaging, and detailed documentation of ballistics evidence are initial critical steps for solving and preventing gun-related crimes. Members shall follow the guidelines in this directive to ensure these steps are performed effectively.

8.47.04 GENERAL OFFENSE REPORTING

Anytime a member recovers a firearm, cartridge casings, ammunition, or firearm-related parts/equipment, a General Offense (GO) report or supplemental to a GO report must be completed before the member's end of shift. Reports shall include all relevant information pertaining to the seizure of a firearm, cartridge casings, ammunition, etc., as well as all identifying information, including serial numbers (e.g., Manufacturer name, Model, Caliber, Brand, Color, etc.).

8.47.05 CANVASSING FOR FIREARMS AND CARTRIDGE CASINGS

On all crime scenes or verified shots fired calls, where a specific location has been identified and there is reason to believe a firearm was discharged, members shall complete a canvass for firearms and/or cartridge casings.

Members shall request an available on-duty APD K-9 unit to assist with a canvass for firearms or cartridge casings where a crime took place and there is reason to believe there is outstanding firearms-related evidence to be recovered. If a K-9 unit was not available, this shall be documented in the associated report.

As part of the canvassing process for firearms and/or cartridge casings, members shall attempt to obtain all associated surveillance video related to the investigation. When members are unable to obtain surveillance video due to technological issues, this shall be documented in the member's report.

8.47.06 FIREARMS

Members shall follow all firearm safety rules in accordance with department training when handling firearms.

When collecting a firearm in the field, members shall use disposable gloves. Members shall handle the firearm in the most minimal way possible to render it "safe" and package it for submittal to property. Rendering a firearm as safe includes unloading any ammunition. In the event the firearm has a removable magazine, the magazine shall be removed from the magazine well. All unloaded ammunition from a firearm shall be placed into an evidence envelope. The evidence envelope shall be entered into evidence following current evidence submission procedures. In the event a member is unable to render a firearm safe, the member should seek guidance from on-call CGIU personnel.

Before collecting a firearm, members shall take photographs documenting the firearm's original location.

Members may collect or move a firearm for safety purposes without completing the above steps, such as when the presence of the firearm poses an immediate threat or is in danger of being lost or contaminated. In those instances, members shall document this in their report. Once a scene has been rendered safe, standard evidence-collection procedures shall be followed.

Members shall complete a query of the serial number of all collected firearms in NCIC/CCIC. Members shall document any obliterated or defaced serial numbers in their reports.

Members shall use an appropriate property firearm box or paper evidence bag when transporting a firearm from a scene. Members shall not place any firearm or related parts/equipment in plastic bags.

All collected firearms shall be submitted to property at the Aurora Police Department Headquarters. Members shall not enter a firearm into property at any district station or other location without prior approval from on-call Crime Gun Intelligence Unit (CGIU) personnel unless extenuating circumstances exist. Any firearm entered into property at a location other than APD Headquarters, shall also require notification via email to property@auroragov.org and CGIU@auroragov.org. The notification must include the reason for the extenuating circumstances, the location where the firearm was entered, the evidence locker number, the associated case number, the property tag number(s), and who authorized the exception.

All firearms shall be entered into property as "Seized/Evidence" unless the firearm is specifically held for safekeeping.

Found or abandoned firearms shall also be entered into property as "Seized/Evidence" unless independent facts and circumstances deem otherwise. CGIU should be consulted before entering firearms as "Found."

When a firearm is entered into the APD Property & Evidence Unit, the submitting member shall:

1. Utilize a designated firearm box consistent with the firearm type.
2. Place a zip tie through the magazine well and up through the chamber area. Once secure, the slide should be let forward slowly.
3. Ensure the firearm serial number is visible when possible.
4. Place zip ties around the front of the slide near the barrel and around the pistol grip.
5. Place the base plate of the empty magazine against the bottom edge of the box. Secure the magazine by placing the zip tie above the base plate (no higher than halfway) so the magazine doesn't move. (Large capacity magazines may need a second zip tie).
6. Complete the necessary information outlined on the firearm box.

7. Place an evidence tag for the firearm on the spine of the box.
8. Place an evidence tag for the firearm magazine (if applicable) on the spine of the box.
9. Use at least one piece of tamper-proof evidence tape to seal the box.
 - a. Rifle boxes shall need more than one piece of tamper-proof evidence tape.
 - b. Evidence tape from a roll is also acceptable and should extend in length no less than tamper evidence tape strips.
10. Sign and date the evidence tape, ensuring the signature covers the tape and box.

Members shall not:

1. Place more than one empty magazine inside a box with a firearm.
2. Place any ammunition or casings inside the magazine or in the evidence box that contains the firearm.
3. Label a firearm as “Automatic” unless it is factually known the firearm is automatic.
4. Place anything down the barrel of a firearm, including zip ties.

8.47.07 CARTRIDGE CASINGS

When collecting cartridge casings in the field, members shall use disposable gloves. Members shall handle cartridge casings in the most minimal way possible to preserve potential DNA or fingerprint evidence.

Before collecting cartridge casings, members shall take photographs of the casings, which depict the general location/area.

Members should be cognizant of cartridge casing grouping areas to aid in reducing the cross-contamination of any potential DNA evidence. When members respond to crime scenes with more than one cartridge casing grouping area, the member shall utilize a separate evidence envelope for each associated grouping. Cartridge casings of a different caliber, regardless of grouping, shall be packaged in a separate evidence envelope.

All collected cartridge casings shall be brought to APD Headquarters and placed in the labeled “NIBIN” box located in the APD Property & Evidence Unit room.

Members shall not enter cartridge casings into property at any district station or other location without prior approval from on-call Crime Gun Intelligence Unit (CGIU) personnel unless extenuating circumstances exist. Any cartridge casing entered into property at a location other than APD Headquarters, shall also require notification via email to property@auroragov.org and CGIU@auroragov.org. The notification must include the reason for the extenuating circumstances, the location where the cartridge casing(s) was entered, the evidence locker number, the associated case number, the property tag number(s), and who authorized the exception.

Members shall complete a direct entry property submission for cartridge casing evidence envelopes. Members shall ensure the evidence envelope has a label affixed, and the envelope is sealed using evidence tape along the entire envelope flap. The envelope must be signed and dated across the tape and envelope.

Evidence labels shall include the caliber of the cartridge casings (if known) and the general location of where the cartridge casing(s) was collected.

8.47.08 EXCEPTIONS TO FIREARM AND CARTRIDGE CASING COLLECTION

In limited circumstances, when an exception is needed, members should contact the on-call CGIU member to obtain guidance.

Crime Scene Unit (CSU) members shall continue to follow established protocols and best practices when responding to crime scenes for collecting firearms and cartridge casings.