


CITY OF ST. CLOUD POLICE DEPARTMENT

	Effective: April 17, 2025	Rescinds:
	Function and Firing of Firearms	
Rescinds: All Previous Versions		Policy and Procedure Number: 120.0
Distribution: All Personnel	CFA Accreditation Standards:	
Review Responsibility: Criminal Investigations Division Commander		

Contents:

1. [Definitions](#)
2. [Materials](#)
3. [Procedures](#)

Purpose – The purpose of this policy is to provide clear and consistent guidelines for the safe handling, inspection, test firing, and documentation of firearms collected as evidence. These guidelines ensure evidentiary integrity, enhance investigative accuracy, and maintain the highest standards of safety for St. Cloud Police Department personnel.

Policy - It is the policy of the St. Cloud Police Department that all firearms collected as evidence undergo standardized testing conducted exclusively by a department-approved certified member. Compliance with established safety protocols, chain-of-custody documentation, and accurate reporting shall be strictly maintained to ensure the admissibility and reliability of evidence in investigative and judicial processes.

1. Definitions

- 1.1 Certified Firearms Instructor and/or Gunsmith Armorer (hereinafter referred to as "CFI/GSA") – A member of the St. Cloud Police Department or law enforcement agency who maintains a commission-approved certification. The Criminal Investigations Division Commander and/or Forensic Supervisor shall maintain a list of approved CFI/GSA. The members are authorized to handle, examine, test, evaluate functionality, and safely manage firearms collected as evidence during criminal cases/investigations and subsequent prosecutions.
- 1.2 Certified Forensic/Crime Scene Member – A member of the St. Cloud Police Department's Forensic Unit who is authorized and certified to handle, examine, test, evaluate the functionality of, and safely manage firearms collected as evidence during criminal investigations and subsequent prosecutions.
- 1.3 Evidence Cartridge Cases - Cartridge cases fired from an unknown firearm and collected at a crime scene.

- 1.4 NIBIN - National Integrated Ballistic Information Network. This is a program managed by ATF that automates the imaging of the unique identifiers of cartridge cases fired from firearms and stores the digital images into a database for comparison across a national network of participating sites.
- 1.5 NIBIN Hit - NIBIN Hits are a result of two or more firearms ballistic evidence acquisitions that have been confirmed as a match by a firearms examiner (at FDLE). NIBIN Hits are based on correlation review of digital images and microscopic confirmation by a firearms examiner (at FDLE). This information/intelligence can be used for investigative purposes and may be suitable for court purposes.
- 1.6 NIBIN Lead - A NIBIN Lead is an unconfirmed, potential association between two or more pieces of firearm ballistic evidence based on a correlation review of the digital images in the NIBIN database by either a firearms examiner (at FDLE) or a trained IBIS technician (at FDLE). A NIBIN Lead is intended to provide a lead for investigative purposes.
- 1.7 Snail Trap System – A specialized bullet containment device designed to safely capture and contain bullets discharged during firearm test-firing procedures. The system reduces the risks associated with ricochet and lead contamination. For purposes of this policy, all firearm test firings authorized by the St. Cloud Police Department shall be conducted using the Snail Trap System located at the Osceola County Sheriff's Office.
- 1.8 Test Fires - Cartridge cases fired from a known firearm for NIBIN entry purposes.

2. Materials

2.1 Materials:

- A. Ammunition
- B. Swabs
- C. Safety Glasses
- D. Hearing Protection
- E. Tyvek Suits
- F. Nitrile Gloves
- G. N95 masks
- H. Ballistic vests
- I. Refractometer

3. Procedures

3.1 Test Firing of Evidentiary Firearms

- A. For crimes involving a firearm (e.g., carrying a concealed firearm, armed robbery, or aggravated assault), the State Attorney's Office may require the firearm to be either:
 - 1. Test fired to show it is operable or,
 - 2. In lieu of test firing, include the following paragraph, which has been pre-approved by the State Attorney's Office, in the Charging Affidavit and/or Case report:

"Based upon my training and experience, it is my opinion that this weapon will, is designed to, or may readily be converted to expel a projectile by the action of an explosive."
- B. In the event the evidentiary firearm needs to be test-fired, it shall be coordinated with the St. Cloud Police Department's Forensic Unit Supervisor or designee.
 - 1. If the firearm is in evidence, in connection with a criminal offense, it shall be retrieved by the approved member that is requesting it be test-fired.
 - 2. If the firearm is at another location (e.g., pawnshop) it shall be lawfully retrieved by the assigned certified member and submitted into Evidence.
 - 3. The Forensic Unit shall verify with the Training Unit that test ammunition is available, or can be obtained, for the specific firearm.
- C. Prior to the test fire, the approved certified member shall inspect the firearm and ammunition for safety and function. If there is doubt as to the safety of the firearm or condition of the ammunition, the certified member shall request the firearm to be submitted to FDLE for further analysis.
- D. After the test fire, the approved certified member shall:
 - 1. Return the firearm to the Forensic Unit.
 - a. The firearm shall be returned to the Forensic Unit the same day, by the certified member.
 - b. The date and time the firearm was turned over to the certified member shall be documented on the related evidence paperwork to document the chain of custody.
 - 2. Complete a supplemental report.
 - 3. Enter the test target and test-fired cartridge(s) into evidence.
 - 4. Ensure copies of the supplement and related evidence paperwork are forwarded to the Records Unit, under the associated case number, and a copy forwarded to the assigned sworn member.

3.2 Test Fired Cartridge Cases:

- A. Upon receiving the firearm from evidence, the approved certified member will render the firearm safe, ensure the barrel is not obstructed and ensure all processing has been completed.
- B. Prior to test firing the firearm, the firearm information, including the serial number, will be compared to the information previously entered into RMS. If the serial number on the firearm is different than the one in RMS, the Forensic Unit or the originating agency will be notified of the difference.
- C. The certified member will obtain the appropriate test fire ammunition.
- D. The certified member shall record all test fire procedures using their department-issued Body Worn Camera (BWC) or video recording device. All recordings shall be documented and promptly uploaded to Evidence.com as official evidence.
- E. The certified member will inscribe at least two test fire cartridges with the abbreviated case number (e.g. 11-1234), the item number of the known firearm, the certified member's initials and the appropriate test number (e.g. T1, T2). The certified member will create an envelope labeled with the case number, initials, firearm information including the item number, make, model, caliber and serial number and Evidence Tag of the test fired cartridge cases.
- F. The cartridges should be loaded in the appropriate order and position within the magazine prior to test firing. The approved certified member will test fire the firearm in the designated Test Fire Room or at the Gun Range.
- G. See the section below for Test Fire Room and Gun Range requirements and procedures.
- H. After test firing the firearm, the cartridge cases will be placed into the corresponding envelope.
- I. The certified member will enter the test fires into RMS and submit them into evidence.
- J. The test fired cartridge will be submitted to FDLE for further analysis.

3.3 Test Fire Room Procedures:

- A. The Test Fire Room located at the Osceola County Sheriff's Office will be used to test fire known firearms function and firing for NIBIN Entry (if applicable).
- B. The firearm and known ammunition will be selected, marked and prepared at the Laboratory as stated above.
- C. Once the firearm is rendered safe, the firearm must be visually examined in the laboratory prior to firing. This includes examining the condition of the barrel using a barrel light, checking the firing pin, and checking the function of the slide and firearm. If the firearm does not appear safe, is in pieces, or cannot be fired, it should be submitted to FDLE for further analysis.

- D. Firearms will be transported from the St. Cloud Police Department in an unloaded condition in a department vehicle to the Osceola County Sheriff's Office. Firearms will not be loaded with the magazine or ammunition until the approved certified member is in the Test Fire Room, the firearm is pointed into the snail trap, and the certified member is ready to test fire the weapon.
- E. Only SCPD personnel previously authorized, trained and certified will conduct test fires of known firearms.
- F. The "Danger, Firing Range, Firearms in Progress" sign will be placed on the exterior of the outer room door and on the exterior Test Fire Room door prior to test firing firearms.
- G. All test fires must be conducted in the presence of a SCPD Forensic Unit personnel that has been authorized to have access to the Test Fire Room or another approved certified member with the St. Cloud Police Department. The Criminal Investigations Division Commander and/or Forensic Supervisor shall maintain a list of certified members approved to function and test fire firearms collected as evidence. Both members will wear appropriate safety equipment when the firearm is being test fired. Clean Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) will be kept outside the Test Fire Room.
 - 1. Safety equipment for the certified member test firing the firearm includes: two layers of nitrile gloves, shatter resistant eyeglasses/goggles, Tyvek suit (over the ballistic vest), N95 mask, hearing protection (foam ear plugs and outer earmuffs), and a ballistic vest.
 - 2. Safety equipment for the "safety member" outside the Test Fire Room includes: hearing protection (ear plugs and outer ear protection) and ballistic vest.
- H. The "safety member" will remain outside the closed Test Fire Room and visually observe the test firing process using a camera monitor.
- I. The firearm box and other packaging containers will remain outside the Test Fire Room to reduce the potential for lead contamination.
- J. The Air Purifier will be turned on and placed near the firearm port on the snail trap when test firing in the Test Fire Room.
- K. Prior to removing PPE, the table tops and other smooth areas will be wiped off with the lead wipes. The lead wipes will be disposed of inside the designated receptacle inside the Test Fire Room. The cleaning log (located outside the Test Fire Room) will be completed once all PPE is removed.
- L. All disposable PPE will be disposed of inside the Test Fire Room in the designated receptacle, except the inner layer of nitrile gloves. The inner layer of nitrile gloves will be used to carry the evidence outside the room and will be disposed of in the designated receptacle.
- M. The test firing certified members will wash their hands with "D-Lead" hand soap as soon as possible after leaving the test fire room.
- N. The Test Fire Room will be deep cleaned using the designated vacuum with a HEPA filter and lead

wipes. The certified member conducting the deep clean will wear the proper PPE to include a Tyvek suit, nitrile gloves, eye protection and an N95 mask. After the deep clean is complete, the lead test strips will be used to test several surfaces inside the room, including the tabletop, floor near the snail trap, wall near the snail trap, and the interior door handle. The results and cleaning will be noted on the cleaning log. The PPE will be disposed of in the designated receptacle inside the Test Fire Room.

- O. Osceola County Sheriff's Office Forensic Unit personnel will have access to a key for the Test Fire Room. Only authorized personnel will utilize this key.
- P. The certified member will only discharge firearms into the snail trap and will not use targets or other resources.
- Q. The certified member will collect the fired cartridge cases after test firing the firearm.
- R. The certified member will remove the fired bullets from the snail trap and place them in a designated location. The fired bullets will be turned over to the Forensic Unit for disposal.

3.4 Gun Range Procedures:

- A. The St. Cloud Police Department may use the Osceola County Sheriff's Office Gun Range to test fire known firearms for the function and firing of firearms for electronic submission.
- B. The firearms and known ammunition will be selected, marked and prepared at the Laboratory as stated above.
- C. Once the firearm is rendered safe, the firearm must be visually examined in the laboratory prior to firing. This includes examining the condition of the barrel using a barrel light, checking the firing pin, and checking the function of the slide and firearm. If the firearm does not appear safe, is in pieces, or cannot be fired, it should be submitted to FDLE for further analysis. A CFI/GSA with the Osceola County Sheriff's Office may also be contacted for assistance.
- D. Firearms will be transported in an unloaded condition. Firearms will not be loaded with the magazine or ammunition until the Osceola County Sheriff's Office CFI/GSA or SCPD approved certified member is at the Gun Range, the firearm is pointed down range, and the certified member is ready to test fire the weapon.
- E. Only SCPD certified personnel previously trained and authorized will conduct test fires of known firearms.
- F. All test fires of firearms collected as evidence must be conducted in the presence of another SCPD Forensic Unit member that has been authorized to have access to the Gun Range or an SCPD approved certified member. Both members will wear appropriate safety equipment when the firearm is being test fired.
- G. A member of the Department Training Unit will contact the Osceola County Sheriff's Office Gun Range to schedule a time and date prior to the use of the range.

- H. SCPD Forensic Unit personnel will drive onto the Osceola County Sheriff's Office Gun Range property with an SCPD department vehicle.
- I. SCPD personnel will be attired in an SCPD-approved uniform and/or will display proper SCPD identification.
- J. SCPD certified personnel will not disrupt classes or use range targets while at the Gun Range.
- K. SCPD certified personnel will make contact with any training instructor utilizing the range to make them aware of their presence, if they are present.
- L. SCPD certified personnel will only discharge firearms into the backstop and will not use targets or other resources.
- M. SCPD certified personnel will collect the fired cartridge cases from the Gun Range.



Douglas A. Goerke
Chief of Police