
Restoration of Serial Numbers

804.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The primary purpose for restoring serial numbers is to determine the prior owners or origin of the item from which the number has been recovered. Thus, property can be returned to rightful owners or investigations can be initiated to curb illegal trade of contraband firearms. The purpose of this plan is to develop standards, methodologies, and safety protocols for the recovery of obliterated serial numbers from firearms and other objects using procedures that are accepted as industry standards in the forensic community. All personnel who are involved in the restoration of serial numbers will observe the following guidelines. This policy complies with Penal Code § 11108.9.

804.2 PROCEDURE

Any item coming into the possession of the Shasta County Sheriff's Office as evidence, found property, etc., where the serial numbers have been removed or obliterated may be processed in the following manner:

804.2.1 PRELIMINARY FIREARM EXAMINATION

- (a) Always keep the muzzle pointed in a safe direction. Be sure the firearm is in an unloaded condition. This includes removal of the ammunition source (e.g., the detachable magazine, contents of the magazine) as well as the chamber contents.
- (b) If the firearm is corroded shut or in a condition that would preclude inspection of the chamber contents, treat the firearm as if it is loaded. Make immediate arrangements for a firearms examiner or other qualified examiner to render the firearm safe.
- (c) Accurately record/document the condition of the gun when received. Note the positions of the various components such as the safeties, cylinder, magazine, slide, hammer, etc. Accurately record/document cylinder chamber and magazine contents. Package the ammunition separately.
- (d) If the firearm is to be processed for fingerprints or trace evidence, process before the serial number restoration is attempted. First record/document important aspects such as halos on the revolver cylinder face or other relevant evidence that might be obscured by the fingerprinting chemicals.

804.2.2 PROPERTY BOOKING PROCEDURE

Any employee taking possession of an item with removed/obliterated serial numbers shall book the item into property following standard procedures. The employee booking the item shall indicate on the property form that serial numbers have been removed or obliterated.

804.2.3 DEPUTY RESPONSIBILITY

The evidence technician receiving a firearm when the serial numbers have been removed or obliterated shall arrange for the firearm to be transported to the crime lab for restoration and maintain the chain of evidence.

Restoration of Serial Numbers

804.2.4 DOCUMENTATION

Case reports are prepared in order to document the chain of custody and the initial examination and handling of evidence from the time it is received/collected until it is released.

This report must include a record of the manner in which and/or from whom the firearm was received. This may appear on the request form or property form depending on the type of evidence.

804.2.5 FIREARM TRACE

After the serial number has been restored (or partially restored) by the criminalistics laboratory, the Evidence Technician will complete a Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) National Tracing Center (NTC) Obliterated Serial Number Trace Request Form (ATF 3312.1-OBL) and forward the form to the NTC in Falling Waters, West Virginia or enter the data into the ATF eTrace system.

804.3 BULLET AND CASING IDENTIFICATION

Exemplar bullets and cartridge cases from the firearm, depending upon acceptance criteria and protocol, may be submitted to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) which uses the Integrated Ballistic Identification System (IBIS) technology to search the national database and compare with ballistic evidence recovered from other crime scenes.

804.4 OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

If the item requires any testing other than serial number restoration, fingerprinting or trace evidence collection, the item will be forwarded to the Department of Justice laboratory.

804.4.1 EXCEPTIONS

- A. If a firearm or other item is corroded beyond the point of successful serial number restoration, no attempt will be made to restore the serial number.
- B. If a firearm or other item with a removed/obliterated serial number is turned in for destruction by its owner, the item will be destroyed without attempting to restore the serial number.