

# UNDER *the* SCOPE



MISSOURI STATE HIGHWAY PATROL • CRIME LABORATORY

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To improve efficiency, please notify the lab if analysis of your evidence is no longer required.

To noticeably decrease case turnaround time, only submit those items that require analysis.

Nonprobative items offer no value from a forensic analysis standpoint and their submission will only cause delays.

## Drug Paraphernalia/Nonprobative Items: Time Saving Suggestions

Thousands of non-probative and paraphernalia items are received by the crime lab every year. In this issue, we provide helpful information that you can use to reduce the turnaround time of your drug case.

From a drug analysis standpoint, non-probative items such as empty plastic bags, rolling paper, lighters, personal containers (backpacks, purses, etc.), currency, receipts, driver's licenses, personal care items, or digital storage cards/CDs do not offer any value and their submission to the lab is not necessary.

In general, paraphernalia can be any equipment, product, or material that is modified for the manufacture, use, or concealment of drugs. Paraphernalia items, such as smoking devices, syringes, straws, and plastic bags, may be suitable for scientific analysis and could potentially test positive for a controlled substance. However, while you have the option to collect an unlimited amount of evidence from a scene, only those items necessary to support the drug charge(s) should be submitted to the crime lab for drug analysis. If a paraphernalia item is your probable cause for a search, or needs to be tested for some other specific reason, clearly mark the item or container and include this information on the Laboratory Analysis Request form to ensure that item gets tested.

Most often, paraphernalia items decrease the crime lab's productivity and only add to the turnaround time of all pending cases. Currently, if there is a weighable amount of a controlled substance submitted for a given subject,

paraphernalia items are not typically tested. Unfortunately, even when an item of paraphernalia is not tested, significant time is spent by the Property Officer, Lab Evidence Technician, and Criminalist who must record the movement of the evidence on the chain of custody. When choosing what paraphernalia item to package separately and submit to the crime lab, first select those where a residue is visible to the eye. Smoking devices and larger plastic bags tend to retain more residue than scales and straws, while syringes tend to contain the least as they are designed to expel nearly all their contents when used.

Limiting the amount of evidence submitted for analysis to only those items necessary to support the charge(s) will noticeably decrease the amount of time it takes for you to receive results. Submitting the best, most probative evidence is crucial.

As always, when packaging evidence to submit to the crime lab to support criminal charges, ask the questions, "Is this item probative?", AND "Does it require forensic analysis?" If the answer is "No" or "Not at this time", please package those items separately and retain them at your agency. To help us take the "unnecessary time" out of turnaround time, remember: **Be selective so we can be effective!**

For more ideas on what you can do to effectively decrease the turnaround time of your case, please visit the crime lab's website where you'll find other editions of "Under The Scope", or contact us directly with any questions or training needs you might have.

