



Re-Brief Narcotics Testing and Collection

Recent drug trends necessitate a change in how controlled substances are collected and tested. This is due largely to the drug, fentanyl. Fentanyl is an extremely dangerous synthetic opiate and is frequently mixed with heroin and other controlled substances. The presence of fentanyl may be difficult to immediately detect. In powder form it can resemble cocaine or heroin. It may be mixed with other substances, altering its appearance. Fentanyl can be found in pill, liquid, tar, patch, and other forms. Fentanyl may be easily absorbed through the skin or eyes or inhaled through the nose or mouth. **Exposure to a small amount of fentanyl can cause serious health-related complications or death.**

Law enforcement officers, first responders, deputy coroners, crime scene investigators, and evidence collection personnel should not handle suspected fentanyl or any suspected controlled substance without proper personal protective equipment (PPE). The minimum PPE includes two (2) pair of nitrile (not latex) gloves, face mask (N95) and eye protection.

The following protocols shall be followed when handling, collecting and booking **ALL CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES**:

Handling Instructions

1. **EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, FIELD PRESUMPTIVE TESTING FOR ALL SUSPECTED NARCOTICS WILL BE DISCONTINUED.**
2. Prior to handling any substance that may contain fentanyl, don two (2) pair of nitrile gloves, eye protection and a N95 mask (available through your division).
3. If the substance is already in a sealed container, **DO NOT OPEN.**
4. **Communicate** with other first responders when fentanyl or other unknown substances are present.

Collection, Packaging and Booking Instructions

1. Package all narcotics and other unknown substances in two (2) clear Ziploc plastic bags or clear plastic heat sealed bags of appropriate size. The evidence can then be placed into an envelope and sealed. (EXCEPTION: Plant material will mold in plastic and therefore can be placed in paper bags and/or envelopes.)
2. When doffing PPE, remove the outer set of gloves before touching **ANYTHING** else. Once the outer gloves are off, you can then remove the rest of your PPE.





3. All PPE utilized during the collection of any suspected narcotics or unknown substances shall be disposed of after use. Do NOT retain or reuse any part of your PPE. If you believe your PPE or other equipment has been contaminated with fentanyl, notify your supervisor immediately and follow the protocols described in Orange County Sheriff's Department Policy 1016.3.1.
4. All narcotics or suspicious material shall be packaged prior to being transported to minimize the risk of exposure.
5. All narcotics shall be transported in vehicle trunks or in the rear cargo area of SUV's.
6. Any substance believed to contain fentanyl shall be immediately booked into evidence at the Brad Gates Building.
7. If fentanyl or fentanyl-related substances is suspected, it must be noted on the WRCS evidence request and documented on the evidence envelope.
8. Personnel should not attempt to collect unidentified, loose substances suspected of containing fentanyl. Field Supervisors shall respond to these types of calls and notify a Narcotics Detail Supervisor.

Exposure Risk and Treatment

EXPOSURE: Fentanyl can be ingested orally or inhaled through the nose. It can also be absorbed through the skin or eyes.

SYMPTOMS: The onset of overdose symptoms due to fentanyl exposure usually occurs within minutes. Symptoms include difficulty breathing, drowsiness, sedation, disorientation, pinpoint pupils, skin rash and clammy skin.

IMMEDIATE ACTION: If exposure occurs, remove the exposed individual from the contaminated environment and wash the exposed area of the individual with soap and water as soon as possible. **Do not use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**

MEDICAL INTERVENTION: Seek medical attention and monitor victim. Be prepared to administer naloxone. If the exposed individual exhibits overdose symptoms, immediately administer naloxone which is proven to be effective in counteracting fentanyl exposure. Be prepared to administer additional doses of naloxone every 2-3 minutes until EMS arrives or until the victim is breathing on their own for at least 15 minutes.

IF YOU HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO FENTANYL, NOTIFY YOUR SUPERVISOR IMMEDIATELY.





Filing Procedures

Due to the discontinued use of field presumptive testing, initial case filing evaluations will be based upon the strength of the deputy's documented expert opinion. The Orange County District Attorney's Office has provided guidance in the following area:

Misdemeanor Violations - Citations and Bookings

- Specifically describe the controlled substance seized including the location, packaging, odor, etc.
- Document all evidence you considered in forming your opinion including, but not limited to, the presence of specific paraphernalia, writings, observations of the suspect, evidence of recent use, etc.
- Document suspect statements regarding the seized substances, their use patterns, their familiarity with the substance and recent ingestion, both pre and post Miranda advisement.
- Document witness statements regarding the substance and recent ingestion by the suspect.
- Describe your background, training and experience, specifically related to the identification and use of controlled substances, including the specific substance seized.
- If there is probable cause to believe the substance seized may be methamphetamine or cocaine or any other substance listed in H&S Code sections 11350 or 11377, both violations should be included on the citation. The filing deputy district attorney will have the option to wait for the forensic analysis before filing the case.
- Submit a WRCS request for all cases. Submit an URGENT WRCS request in any case in which the suspected controlled substance was not specifically identified.

Felony Violations

- Contact the respective narcotics detail.
- Narcotics investigators will provide additional expertise and respond as appropriate on a case-by-case basis.
- Specifically describe the controlled substance seized including the location, packaging, odor, etc.
- Document all evidence you considered in forming your opinion including, but not limited to, the presence of specific paraphernalia, writings, observations of the suspect, evidence of recent use, etc.
- Document suspect statements regarding the seized substances, their use patterns, their familiarity with the substance and recent ingestion, both pre and post Miranda advisement.
- Document witness statements regarding the substance and recent ingestion by the suspect.
- Describe your background, training and experience, specifically related to the identification and use of controlled substances, including the specific substance seized.
- Document your expertise, observations, suspect statements, and observations in the crime report and probable cause declaration.
- Deputies should be prepared to articulate their observations, training and expertise, and any other relevant information at the preliminary hearing.
- Submit an URGENT WRCS request to the Crime Lab for any and all substances you believe to be present.

