



# MILWAUKEE POLICE DEPARTMENT

## STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE

### 743 – NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTICS INFORMATION NETWORK PROGRAM

**GENERAL ORDER:** 2025-38  
**ISSUED:** August 4, 2025

**EFFECTIVE:** August 4, 2025

**REVIEWED/APPROVED BY:**  
Assistant Chief Nicole Waldner  
**DATE:** July 3, 2025

**ACTION:** Amends General Order 2023-56 (October 30, 2023)

**WILEAG STANDARD(S):** NONE

#### **743.00 PURPOSE**

The purpose of this standard operating procedure is to identify the process for which Milwaukee Police Department members shall process firearms and spent cartridge casings in order to ensure the timely submission of ammunition components information into the Integrated Ballistics Identification System (IBIS) to identify potential links between shooting incidents and a particular firearm.

#### **743.05 POLICY**

The department, through the Fusion Division, will be proactive in using the IBIS to enter fired spent cartridge casings into the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network (NIBIN) in order to determine whether various shooting incidents can be linked to the same firearm or to a particular firearm.

#### **743.10 DEFINITIONS**

##### **A. BRASS TRAX**

BrassTRAX is the acquisition station which can acquire cartridge case information for entry into IBIS.

##### **B. CORRELATION**

A correlation is a linking of fired cartridge casings based on the various characteristics such as caliber, firing pin marks, and breech face marks to establish likelihood that the casings were fired from the same firearm.

##### **C. CRIME GUNS**

Crime guns are firearms that department members have probable cause to believe have been used in the course of a commission of a crime.

##### **D. FIREARMS EXAMINER**

A firearms examiner is a member of the Wisconsin State Crime Laboratory Bureau (WSCLB) that compares fired cartridge casings that have an assigned investigatory lead in order to verify the investigatory lead and are able to testify to the results in

court.

#### E. INTEGRATED BALLISTICS IDENTIFICATION SYSTEM (IBIS)

IBIS is the technology that allows for the digital imaging of fired spent cartridge casings so that they can be correlated against an electronic database of images in an effort to determine whether various shooting incidents can be linked to the same firearm or to a particular firearm.

#### F. INVESTIGATORY LEAD

Investigatory leads, also known as an unconfirmed hit, is a correlation that indicates the likelihood that two or more cartridge cases were fired in the same firearm. However, an unconfirmed hit must be confirmed by a trained firearm examiner from the WSCLB.

#### G. MATCH POINT

Match Point is the correlation stations where results from computer searches are reviewed by a trained technician.

#### H. NATIONAL INTEGRATED BALLISTICS INFORMATION NETWORK PROGRAM (NIBIN)

NIBIN is the program in which Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) partners with other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies for the purpose of identifying, targeting and prosecuting firearm offenders and their source of crime guns.

#### I. NIBIN TECHNICIAN

NIBIN technicians examine fired cartridge casings and firearms to determine the suitability for entry into IBIS and reads and verifies the correlations to assist in establishing a forensic probable cause linking fired cartridge casings.

#### J. TEST FIRED CARTRIDGE ACQUISITION STATION

Test fired cartridge acquisition station is an apparatus into which a recovered firearm is fired in order to gather a known sample of a fired cartridge casing for entry into IBIS.

### **743.15 STRUCTURE**

The NIBIN program within the department consists of three major components: the BrassTRAX station, the correlation station, and the test fired cartridge acquisition station. The BrassTRAX station and the correlation station are housed at the Fusion Division. There is one test fired cartridge acquisition station within the MPD in the sub-basement of the Police Administration Building. All stations will be staffed by members of the Fusion Division who are trained as NIBIN technicians. Only department and ATF members that are trained by the ATF are authorized to operate any component of the NIBIN program.

Routinely the Milwaukee Police Department conducts comparisons to NIBIN stations at the WSCLB, the Chicago Police Department, and the Northeastern Illinois Crime Lab. Upon request, comparisons can be made to other NIBIN stations based upon information developed during the investigation.

#### **743.20 TRAINING**

The ATF oversees the training of members in two areas of the system:

- A. Acquisition training is training for successfully acquiring digital images of fired cartridge casings into the database.
- B. Correlation training is training for the purpose of successfully reviewing and comparing digitized images in an effort to determine whether the possibility exists that the same firearm was used.

#### **743.25 PROCESSING OF RECOVERED FIRED CARTRIDGE CASINGS AND FIREARMS**

In order to ensure timely and efficient processing and entry of recovered and sample fired cartridge casings into the NIBIN system the following procedures shall be followed. Nothing in this SOP absolves any member from handling all evidence in a manner inconsistent with department SOP.

- A. During the course of an investigation members shall recover and document the recovery of every fired cartridge casing and firearm.
- B. All items are to be placed on department inventory as individual items.
- C. All casing evidence shall be delivered to the Property Control Division (PCD) per SOP.
- D. All crime guns and recovered firearms that meet the testing criteria for the NIBIN program shall be conveyed directly to the Forensics Division per SOP 560 Property.

#### **E. FIREARMS RECOVERED WITH A PERSON IN CUSTODY**

1. The member recovering a firearm with a person in custody shall notify their shift commander. The shift commander shall then notify the CIB shift commander at extension [REDACTED].
2. The member recovering the firearm shall send an email to [REDACTED] as soon as the inventory report involving the firearm is completed to alert the Forensics Division and NIBIN personnel a firearm will need to be processed promptly.
  - a. The email shall include the:
    - Responsible member;
    - Case number associated with the arrest/recovery of the firearm;

- Item numbers for each firearm recovered;
  - Name, race/sex, and date of birth of the arrestee(s) in-custody related to the recovered firearm;
  - The arrest date and time;
  - If the arrest is for a felony or misdemeanor; and
  - Whether or not a hold was placed on the arrestee(s).
- b. NIBIN personnel will determine if the firearm is eligible for entry into the NIBIN database.
3. The member will hand carry the firearm to the Forensics Division for processing. The members shall ensure the firearm has been cleared, is unloaded, and in the locked back position prior to conveying the firearm to the Forensics Division. The member shall write in red ink "Person in Custody" on the inventory report.
- a. If the Forensics Evidence lab is closed, the member shall check in at the Forensics Division window. Forensics Division personnel will take possession of the priority firearm(s). A Forensic Investigator or Crime Scene Investigator will photograph and swab the firearm for DNA prior to notifying NIBIN personnel that the firearm is eligible to be test fired.
- b. The member shall remain at the Forensics Division until the counter case paperwork is completed, an email was sent to [REDACTED] and the Forensics Division has custody of the firearm(s).
4. The Forensics Division shall notify NIBIN personnel at extension [REDACTED] once the firearm has been processed and is ready for test fire.
5. NIBIN personnel will take custody of the firearm from the Forensics Division and conduct the test fire.
- a. NIBIN personnel taking possession of the firearm shall stamp the original completed electronic inventory report with the transfer stamp.
- b. NIBIN personnel shall wear gloves during the test firing process and take all precautions to avoid the destruction of latent prints.
6. Once the test fire is complete, NIBIN personnel shall place the firearm in proper packaging and transfer the firearm to the Forensics Division for latent print processing. Forensics Division personnel taking possession of the firearm shall stamp the original completed electronic inventory report with the transfer stamp.

#### F. RECOVERED FIREARMS NOT ASSOCIATED WITH A PERSON IN CUSTODY

1. After evidence items have been processed for DNA and latent prints, a member of

- the NIBIN program from the Fusion Division will regularly retrieve all firearms from the Forensics Division for NIBIN testing and all fired cartridge casings from PCD.
2. NIBIN members who are taking possession of crime guns for test firing purposes shall stamp the original completed electronic inventory report with the transfer stamp.
  3. Upon completing the NIBIN test fire of a crime gun, the NIBIN member shall immediately return the firearm to the Forensics Division, stamp the original completed electronic inventory report with the transfer stamp.
- G. Fired cartridge casings shall be delivered to the Brass TRAX station for triage of multiple casing recoveries and the entry of fired cartridge casings.
- H. Upon successful entry into Brass TRAX, the casings shall be returned to the PCD.
- I. If a firearm appears to be in a state of disrepair or has obvious signs of inoperability, they shall not test fire the weapon unless it can be fixed with parts in the onsite library. If the firearm cannot be fixed with parts in the onsite library, the firearm(s) shall be transmitted to the WSCLB for evaluation of the operability of the firearm. The Letter of Transmittal must indicate that along with evaluation of the firearm, a test fire and comparison to scene casings are desired.
- J. A NIBIN member shall collect two samples of a fired cartridge casing from the firearm. The sample fired cartridge casings shall be delivered to the BrassTRAX station for entry into IBIS and the correlation station for analysis. The NIBIN member shall then return the firearm to the Forensics Division for later delivery to the PCD.
- K. If during the course of the investigation the case officer receives credible intelligence that the firearm used in the offense originated from or was used in an offense in an area outside the standard search area of Wisconsin and northern Illinois, the case officer shall contact a NIBIN technician and inform them of the suspected point of origin so that the suspected point of origin can be included in the search.
- L. The NIBIN technician shall file a supplemental report regarding the processing of the firearm and fired cartridge casing, the results of the NIBIN entry, and the correlation of fired cartridge casings.
- M. If the NIBIN correlation results in an investigatory lead, the NIBIN technician shall notify a Fusion Division supervisor and the commanding officer(s), or their representative(s) of the investigations division(s) that the investigatory lead exists.
- N. A Fusion Division supervisor shall assign the NIBIN case a NIBIN Designation and assign the NIBIN case to the primary investigator from the investigating work location.
- O. The case officer/detective will need to confer with the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office to determine if the investigatory lead will be sent to the WSCLB for confirmation. The WSCLB will only accept investigatory lead confirmation cases that have been authorized by a prosecutor. If so authorized, the case officer/detective shall

be responsible for submitting the *Letter of Transmittal*.

- P. Cases that are linked to a homicide shall be referred to the Homicide Division for investigation and coordination. The commanding officer of the investigations division(s) with the associated offenses will also receive a notification regarding the results.
- Q. Priority requests for NIBIN processing can be made by contacting the Fusion Division watch desk at extension [REDACTED].
- R. NIBIN processing hierarchy is:
1. Homicides;
  2. Sexual Assaults;
  3. Non-Fatal Shootings;
  4. Armed Robberies;
  5. General Felonies;
  6. Misdemeanor Offenses.
- S. The NIBIN program shall not process firearms evidence for an officer-involved shooting. All such evidence must be transmitted to the WSCLB by the investigator.

#### **743.30 OPERATION SAVE-A-CASING**

- A. The Operation Save-A-Casing program is a partnership between the Milwaukee Police Department and the community to combat firearm-related crime.
- B. Save-A-Casing Envelopes Related to Lost or Stolen Firearms
1. Members receiving a *Save-A-Casing envelope* (form PE-5) from a person whose firearm was reported lost or stolen shall complete a *Consent to Search Authorization* (form PF-3) indicating consent to enter the casings into IBIS in accordance with SOP 085.55 Citizen Contacts, Field Interviews, Search and Seizure.
  2. The member shall place the casing and the *Consent to Search Authorization* on department inventory in accordance with SOP 560 Property. The member shall utilize the case number from the lost or stolen firearm report for the inventory report. The member shall indicate in the circumstances field on the inventory report that it is Operation Save-A-Casing related.
- C. Voluntary Save-A-Casing Envelopes
1. Members receiving a *Save-A-Casing envelope* (form PE-5) from a person who

voluntarily provides the department with a casing even if their firearm was not reported lost or stolen shall provide the person with an Operation Save-A-Casing receipt.

2. The responsible work location shall convey the casing and a copy of the Operation Save-A-Casing receipt to the Fusion Division within 24 hours of receipt.
3. The Fusion Division shall maintain control of the casing until such time that an incident report is filed indicating the related firearm was reported lost or stolen. If the related firearm is reported lost or stolen, the Fusion Division will be responsible for completing a *Consent to Search Authorization* (form PF-3) and completing the inventory report in accordance with subsection B.
4. The Fusion Division shall maintain a database to track the voluntary receipt of casings under the Operation Save-A-Casing program.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J.B.N.' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

JEFFREY B. NORMAN  
CHIEF OF POLICE

JBN:mfk