

Explosives and Hazardous Devices Report Writing Guidelines

Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	2
2	SCOPE	2
3	PROCEDURE	2
3.1	Destructive Device Determination	2
3.2	Results of Examinations	2
3.3	Interpretations and Limitations.....	3
3.4	Remarks.....	4
4	REVISION HISTORY	5
	APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE WORDING FOR THE RESULTS OF EXAMINATION SECTION FOR EXPLOSIVES AND HAZARDOUS DEVICES LABORATORY REPORTS.....	6

Explosives and Hazardous Devices Report Writing Guidelines

1 INTRODUCTION

FBI *Laboratory Reports* issued by explosives and hazardous devices examiners conducting casework in explosives and hazardous devices analysis summarize analytical findings during the forensic analysis of evidence. Due to the wide variety of requests and evidence received, this technical procedure (TP) only provides general guidelines for report writing. It is not possible to anticipate every type of report that may be written, and this document provides examples of common occurrences. It is acceptable to use other wording if the examination results are accurately communicated, a description of the methodology used to reach the results is included, limitations are addressed, and wording is approved during the technical review process by an authorized technical reviewer in the explosives and hazardous devices discipline.

2 SCOPE

This TP provides guidelines for writing FBI *Laboratory Reports* for explosives and hazardous devices examinations and supplements the practices in the [FBI Laboratory Quality Assurance Manual \(QAM\)](#) and the [FBI Laboratory Operations Manual \(LOM\)](#). The procedures described herein apply to personnel conducting work in the explosives and hazardous devices subdiscipline.

3 PROCEDURE

All *Laboratory Reports* containing opinions and interpretations generated by explosives and hazardous devices examiners will follow the requirements in the [FBI Laboratory Operations Manual \(LOM\)](#) and will also contain an “Interpretations and Limitations” section.

3.1 Destructive Device Determination

The Destructive Device Determination section contains the opinion of the explosives and hazardous devices examiner as to whether the device or device components possess the functional characteristics and/or design elements of a weapon along with the rationale for such an opinion, as applicable. This section will be located before the Results of Examinations section. The examiner may use interpretive wording to aid the reader in understanding the destructive device determination.

3.2 Results of Examinations

The Results of Examinations section contains methods, results, opinions, and/or conclusions of forensic examinations conducted by the explosives and hazardous devices examiner. Example wording for examination results can be found in Appendix A.

The following statement will be used in all *Laboratory Reports* detailing the methods used in the examination of evidence:

The methods used during the analysis of the evidentiary items included the following (the explosives and hazardous devices examiner may choose the appropriate methods from the below list and may also list other methods, as applicable):

- visual examinations of observable, physical characteristics
- visual comparison examinations of observable, physical characteristics
- microscopical examinations of observable, physical characteristics
- microscopical comparison examinations of observable, physical characteristics
- measurements of physical characteristics
- measurement comparison examinations of physical characteristics
- visual examinations of photographs
- visual examinations of x-ray images
- visual examinations of video
- visual examinations of documents
- reviews of references
- reviews of relevant case documentation

3.3 Interpretations and Limitations

The Interpretations and Limitations section consists of the following statements that will be used in all *Laboratory Reports* containing opinions and interpretations:

- Conclusive identifications of the source of an item may not be realized in every case due to the absence or alterations of specific manufacturer or other unique markings on items of evidence.
- Item source identifications that refer to a specific distributor or manufacturer have not been confirmed with that distributor or manufacturer unless otherwise stated in this report.
- The physical characteristics, such as, but not limited to, material type, shape, and color of all evidentiary items described in this report are based on visual and/or microscopical observations, unless otherwise noted. Other parameters such as, but not limited to, distances, angles, and voltages associated with individual evidentiary items are based on physical measurements and are approximate, unless otherwise noted. Should a more complete characterization of these items be required, additional examinations can be requested of the appropriate forensic discipline. Diagrams such as, but not limited to, drawings and schematics are not to scale, unless otherwise noted.
- (This limitation will be used when an affirmative or negative destructive device determination is made.) The two elements that must be met to make an affirmative destructive device determination are that the device or device components constitute an explosive or incendiary device and that the device or device components possess the functional characteristics and/or design elements of a weapon. These two elements are purely technical, not legal, and are not meant to infer the intent of the individual(s) who constructed the device.

- (This limitation will be used when an affirmative or negative destructive device determination is made.) In the absence of characteristic weapon design elements, physical examination of a device or its components taken outside the context of utilization may not allow a destructive device determination to be made. In said absence, an examiner may have to consider the circumstances in which the device was used to determine its capability to function as a weapon; this consideration is not meant to infer the intent of the individual(s) who constructed the device.
- (This limitation will be used for a device that has functioned.) The explosion and or fire resulting from the functioning of an explosive or incendiary device can cause extensive damage, such as fragmentation, charring, or other severe alterations to items of evidence. Due to the destructive nature of these energetic events, conclusive determinations as to the recognition and identification of specific device components, as well as the exact design and functioning of the device, may not always be realized in every case.
- (This limitation will be used for a device that has been rendered safe.) Conclusive determinations of the exact design and functioning of a rendered safe or disassembled device may not be realized in every case due to the condition of the components.

The examiner must also convey other limitations as appropriate. The examiner may use interpretive wording to aid the reader in understanding such limitations. A noncomprehensive list of such limitations are as follows:

- If results were limited based on a limited number of components, this must be stated.
- If examinations were limited due to the nature of the packaging of the evidence, this must be stated.
- If examinations were limited by the method used to collect the evidence, this must be stated.

The following limitation will be included on the first page of the case notes associated with the *Laboratory Report*:

- The physical characteristics, such as, but not limited to, material type, shape, and color of all evidentiary items described in these examination notes are based on visual and/or microscopical observations, unless otherwise noted. Measurements of parameters such as, but not limited to, distances, angles, and voltages are approximate, unless otherwise noted. Diagrams such as, but not limited to, drawings and schematics are not to scale, unless otherwise noted.

3.4 Remarks

The Remarks section will follow the requirements in the [FBI Laboratory Operations Manual \(LOM\)](#).

4 REVISION HISTORY

Revision	Issued	Changes
05	09/15/2022	Updated to new document template.

APPENDIX A: EXAMPLE WORDING FOR THE RESULTS OF EXAMINATION SECTION FOR EXPLOSIVES AND HAZARDOUS DEVICES LABORATORY REPORTS

Destructive Device Determination:

A destructive device is a device that has the functional characteristics and/or design elements of a weapon. The design of the device incorporated an element that has been used by bomb builders to increase the potential to inflict personal injury or property damage. This element included nails taped to the outside of the cardboard tube. Due to this design element, it is the opinion of this examiner that the device components present meet the two technical elements of a destructive device (i.e., the device components are those of an explosive device, and the components possess the functional characteristics and/or design elements of a weapon). Properly assembled and initiated, the resulting explosion of this destructive device could cause property damage, personal injury, or death. A detailed description of the device components is provided hereafter.

Results of Examinations:

Present within the submitted Items 1 - 10 are the disassembled remains of an improvised explosive device (IED), also known as a homemade bomb. This device was rendered safe by law enforcement bomb technicians. The general components of an IED consist of an explosive main charge, a container, and an initiating system, all of which are present in the submitted items. This IED consisted of a low-explosive main charge contained within a cardboard tube and an electrical initiating system. Nails were taped to the outside of the cardboard tube. The initiating system consisted of wire, a 9-volt battery, tape, and model rocket engine igniters. Properly assembled and initiated, the resulting explosion from this IED could cause property damage, personal injury, or death. A detailed description of the IED components is provided hereafter.

Methods

The methods used during the analysis of the evidentiary items included the following:

- visual examinations of observable, physical characteristics
- microscopical examinations of observable, physical characteristics
- measurements of physical characteristics

Interpretations and Limitations

- Conclusive identifications of the source of an item may not be realized in every case due to the absence or alterations of specific manufacturer or other unique markings on items of evidence.
- Item source identifications that refer to a specific distributor or manufacturer have not been confirmed with that distributor or manufacturer unless otherwise stated in this report.
- The physical characteristics, such as, but not limited to, material type, shape, and color of all evidentiary items described in this report are based on visual and/or microscopical observations, unless otherwise noted. Other parameters such as, but not limited to, distances, angles, and voltages associated with individual evidentiary items are based on

physical measurements and are approximate, unless otherwise noted. Should a more complete characterization of these items be required, additional examinations can be requested of the appropriate forensic discipline. Diagrams such as, but not limited to, drawings and schematics are not to scale, unless otherwise noted.

- The two elements that must be met to make an affirmative destructive device determination are that the device or device components constitute an explosive or incendiary device and that the device or device components possess the functional characteristics and/or design elements of a weapon. These two elements are purely technical, not legal, and are not meant to infer the intent of the individual(s) who constructed the device.
- In the absence of characteristic weapon design elements, physical examination of a device or its components taken outside the context of utilization may not allow a destructive device determination to be made. In said absence, an examiner may have to consider the circumstances in which the device was used to determine its capability to function as a weapon; this consideration is not meant to infer the intent of the individual(s) who constructed the device.
- Conclusive determinations of the exact design and functioning of a rendered safe or disassembled device may not be realized in every case due to the condition of the components.