

Best Practice Recommendation for Lifting of Footwear and Tire Impressions



WHAT IS AN AAFS STANDARD FACTSHEET?

The AAFS produces clear, concise, and easy-to-understand factsheets to summarize the contents of technical and professional forensic science standards on the OSAC Registry. They are not intended to provide an interpretation for any portion of a published standard.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STANDARD?

This Best Practice Recommendation (BPR) sets forth best practices for lifting footwear and tire impression evidence to optimize the preservation of details in these impressions.

The BPR is a guide for crime scene personnel responsible for preserving footwear and tire evidence at the scene and for forensic science service provider personnel responsible for lifting footwear and tire impressions from evidence submitted for examination.

WHY IS THIS STANDARD IMPORTANT? WHAT ARE ITS BENEFITS?

Footwear and tire impressions are commonly encountered at crime scenes. These impressions can contain information from the shoe or tire that made them, such as class characteristics (the overall pattern) and randomly acquired characteristics (RACs), such as nicks, scratches, or tears.

Lifting these impressions using methods that optimize the preservation of class characteristics and RACs is very important.

The details lifted in an impression are utilized in the comparison process to known shoes or tires.

HOW IS THIS STANDARD USED, AND WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?

This standard can be used by any forensic science practitioner who has completed a relevant training program and has experience in the essential skills required to understand and apply the principles outlined in this BPR. It does not replace a formalized training program for the lifting of footwear and tire track evidence. These best practices can be used to provide guidance when creating standard operating procedures (SOPs), to supplement existing SOPs, or replace existing SOPs as deemed appropriate by a forensic science service provider.

This BPR is easy to follow and outlines the equipment and materials needed to lift footwear and tire impressions encountered on a wide variety of surfaces, such as paper, countertops, floors, and doors.

The BPR identifies the best methods to use to lift footwear and tire evidence, depending on the surface the impression is on (e.g., smooth or textured) or what the impression is composed of (e.g., blood or dust). How to best preserve and package the lifted impressions are also explained. The methods included in this BPR may not cover all aspects of unusual or uncommon conditions.

