



Specimen Collection Instructions for Postmortem Blood Alcohol and Controlled Substance Testing

Pennsylvania coroners and medical examiners must collect blood specimens from persons killed as the result of motor vehicle accidents. The specimens and a form containing information on the deceased individual, accident, and specimen collection must be sent to the Department of Health Bureau of Laboratories. Specimens are tested for alcohol and controlled substances. The test results obtained are reported to the coroners and medical examiners and are used to assess the impact of intoxication on motor vehicle fatalities.

Collect specimens as soon as possible after death and before the body is embalmed.

Do NOT collect specimens using embalming equipment.

Do NOT use alcohol or alcoholic antiseptics in a manner which may contaminate the specimen.

1. Attach the 16-gauge needle to the disposable syringe.
2. Use the syringe to obtain blood from the victim. Whenever possible, take blood from the heart. Otherwise, take blood from the femoral vein or another large blood vessel (Site of Sample Collection).

Attempt to collect at least 20 mL of blood.

The specimen collection kit includes two gray-topped 10 mL blood collection tubes. Ideally, both tubes should be filled with blood.

3. Use the syringe to transfer the blood to a 10 mL gray-topped blood collection tube by **puncturing** the tube's stopper with the needle. The vacuum in the tube should draw the blood from the syringe.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 to transfer blood to the second 10 mL gray-topped blood collection tube.
5. Dispose of the syringe and attached needle in a proper sharps collection container.
6. Immediately invert the tubes slowly and completely to thoroughly mix the blood with the anticoagulant and preservative in the tubes.

Do NOT shake the tubes vigorously.

7. Complete the following on the two white Seals:
 - Name of Subject (Victim)
 - Specimen Collector's Initials
 - Date
 - Time
 - No. – Write in the 6-digit number found on the kit box, collection tubes, and Report of Toxicology Studies form
 - Do not complete Police Officer's Initials and Supervisor's Initials

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8. Seal each 10 mL gray-topped blood collection tube with a completed, white seal. Press the center of the seal onto the top of the rubber stopper. Firmly press the seal onto the sides of the tube.
9. Place the sealed blood collection tubes back into the kit's plastic box. Place the white absorbent pad on top of the blood collection tubes. Snap the plastic box lid closed.
10. Complete the following on the six red Integrity Seals:
 - Sealed By (Name or initials of specimen collector)
 - Date
11. Seal the top and bottom of the plastic box using two completed, red Integrity Seals.

Do NOT complete the Police Officer's Report or the Chain of Possession on top of the plastic box.

12. Place the plastic box in the plastic bag and seal the bag.
13. Complete the Report of Toxicology Studies form. Please print legibly.

Site of Sample Collection is the part of the body from which the specimen was collected (e.g., heart, other specified site).
Facility Where Specimen Was Collected is the name and address of the location where the specimen was collected (e.g., accident scene, hospital, coroner's office).

If the accident involved a vehicle other than an automobile, note the type of vehicle (e.g., all-terrain vehicle, bicycle, motorcycle, snowmobile) in the blank space at the bottom of the form.

14. Remove the goldenrod sheet (the last page) if you want to retain it for your records.
15. Place the sealed bag and the completed Report of Toxicology Studies form in the mailing box.

Do NOT put the Report of Toxicology Studies form into the plastic bag.

16. Close the mailing box and seal it with four completed, red integrity seals.
17. Write the return address on the mailing box.
18. If possible, refrigerate (2-8 °C) the kit until it is shipped to the Bureau of Laboratories.

**If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Okraska at
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