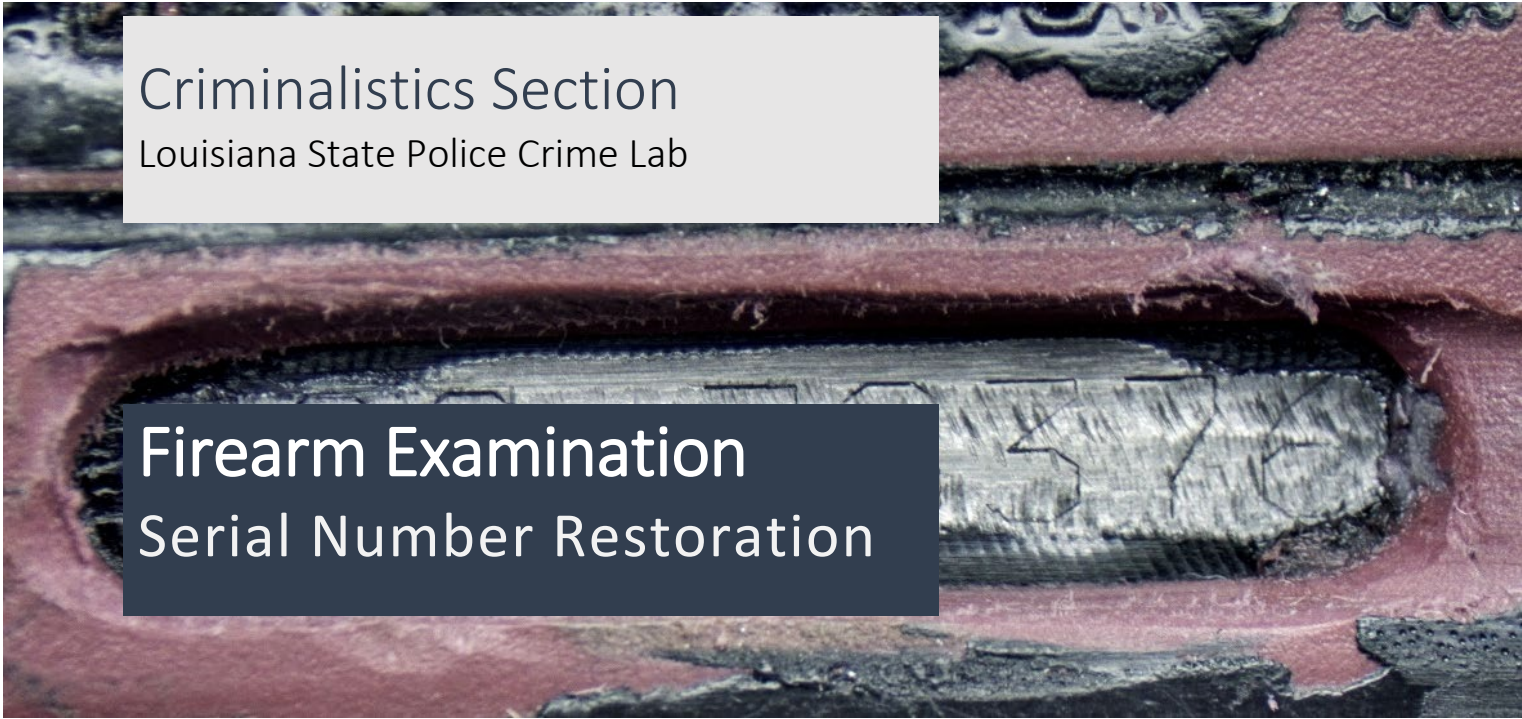




Criminalistics Section

Louisiana State Police Crime Lab

Firearm Examination Serial Number Restoration

WHAT

The Federal Gun Control Act of 1968 requires that serial numbers be stamped on all firearms manufactured for sale in the United States since 1968. In an attempt to prevent Law Enforcement from determining who the lawful owner of a firearm is, criminals often obliterate the serial number. Firearms manufactured prior to the Gun Control Act do not require a serial number.

WHY

There are several different ways to obliterate serial numbers. Serial numbers can be obliterated by peening, punching, grinding, scratching, drilling, etc.

HOW

When the manufacturer stamps the serial number, the molecules underneath the number are compressed tightly together. This process is called “plastic deformation”. When the serial number is obliterated, the obliterated area can be treated with specific acidic solutions. Because the molecules are compressed together the acid works at a faster rate and the serial number is often able to be restored. There is also a non-destructive option to recover an obliterated serial number on a magnetic surface using Magnaflux. This is where a magnetic liquid is poured over the obliterated area while a heavy-duty magnet is placed on the other side, causing the magnetic particles to invade the areas where the serial number once was.

Serial Number: Non repeating numbers and/or letters applied to a firearm for identification purposes. The serial number may appear on the slide, chamber, or other areas of the firearm but must be conspicuously located on the frame or receiver.

Serial Number Restoration



Staffing

Currently, all the ten individuals trained as Firearm Examiners are also trained in Serial Number Restoration. All of these examiners have completed the ATF Serial Number restoration course.

Interesting Facts

The Firearms Unit receives approximately fifty cases for serial number restoration every year.

The same methods used for serial number restoration can also be used to restore Vehicle Identification Numbers (VIN) on automobiles, Hull Identification Numbers on some boats, and serial numbers on engines.

