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Nile Red

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Name of Procedure:

Nile Red

Suggested Uses:

One of the most effective ways to recover latent prints from items of evidence is to use a laser dye followed by a laser or alternate light source examination. Nile Red is an effective alternative laser dye in the recovery of latent impressions on various surfaces. This dye is normally used on non-porous surfaces (metal, glass, plastic, etc.); however, under certain conditions can be used on porous or semi-porous surfaces. This dye is extremely efficient in that it is highly fluorescent and can be used with either an argon-ion laser, copper-vapor laser, YAG laser or various alternate light sources.

Equipment Needed to Perform Procedures:

A - Laser (Argon-Ion, YAG, Copper Vapor) or alternate light sources
(Omniprint1000, Spectrum 9000, etc.)

B - Laser Goggles

C - Filter (Laser)

D - Camera (35mm, 2 1/4, MP-4, CU5)

E - Fume hood

F - Rubber gloves and apron

G - Face shield visor and/or safety goggles.

H - Plastic applicators with spouts or glass tray for submerging items

Chemicals Needed For Preparation of Chemical Solution(s):

A - .005 grams of Nile Red

B - Methanol or ethanol

Formula/Directions for Preparation of Chemical Solution(s):

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1. Place .005 grams of Nile Red in 500 ml of methanol or ethanol. (To approximate this amount, moisten the end of a tooth pick and insert it in the chemical. What adheres to the toothpick can then be transferred to the solution. Properly dispose of the toothpick after use.)
2. Thoroughly dissolve the Nile Red in the methanol and the solution is ready to use.

Processing Procedures for Application to Item(s) of Evidence:

The first (critical) step is to super glue the item of evidence (SEE - Cyanoacrylate ester process). This process will not only locate many latent prints, but more importantly (for the laser process) will adhere to the most minute of fingerprint residue not visible to the naked eye. The process will virtually "set" the latent print in place. Once this procedure is completed, the Nile Red solution can be applied.

Non-Porous Items:

1. Utilizing a fume hood and rubber gloves, spray or completely submerge the item of evidence with a methanol solution of Nile Red and allow to dry.
2. When completely dry, view the item using either the argon-ion laser or an alternate light source while wearing laser safety goggles.

Note: This dye will preferentially adhere to the super glued print, but a certain amount will adhere to the item itself. If too much dye is used, the entire surface will fluoresce and mask the latent print. In this case, simply rinse the item with plain methanol. The excess dye will wash away and in most cases the dye adhering to the latent print will remain.

If any latent prints are present, they will fluoresce bright yellow.

Steps to Preserve Developed Impressions:

The most appropriate methods to preserve developed impressions is through photography, using the proper techniques (See Photographic Equipment/Procedures) and/or electronically recording the impressions (See Image Processing). The utilization of a 35 mm, 2 1/4, MP-4, or CU5 camera will suffice for Nile Red developed prints because the fluorescence is so intense. However, all laser prints must be photographed using a laser filter; otherwise, they will not be recorded on the film.

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Safety Concerns:

Presently the safety concerns have not been thoroughly investigated in respect to the use of this chemical and there are varied opinions on the associated health effects. This chemical solution should be applied and treated with extreme care until the full health effects are known. As with any chemical it may cause some irritation when in contact with the eyes or skin and may be harmful if inhaled or ingested. The methanol used in this solution is corrosive and flammable and should be handled with extreme care.

Storage and Location of Chemicals and Solutions:

The Nile Red reagent should be stored in the original shipping container until needed.

The methanol or ethanol solution should be stored in the original shipping containers or in a flammable liquid storage area until needed.

Daily use solutions can be stored in a clear spray bottles and larger solutions should be stored in dark bottles.

Shelf Life:

Nile Red Reagent - Indefinite

Nile Red Solutions - Up to six (6) months.

Other Information:

Nile Red may be used in conjunction with other fluorescent dyes which may be available.

This procedure is not recommended at this time for use on items which may be transferred to other laboratory sections until the health effects are thoroughly investigated.

Nile Red will selectively stain the hydrophobic compounds such as lipids in the cyanoacrylate developed impressions.