

Technical Procedure for Physical Developer (PD)

1.0 Purpose - This procedure describes how to make the Physical Developer solution and apply it to items of evidence.

2.0 Scope - This procedure applies to porous items of evidence that are to be examined for the presence of latent prints. Physical Developer is a silver-based reagent that reacts with components of sweat in fingerprint residue to form gray deposits.

3.0 Definitions – N/A

4.0 Equipment, Materials and Reagents

4.1 Equipment and Materials

- Laboratory coat and gloves
- Magnetic stirrer, magnetic follower and magnetic retriever
- Glass beakers
- Graduated cylinders
- Dark, shatter-proof container
- Forceps (soft tipped)
- Glass trays
- Camera/scanner

4.2 Reagents

- Ammonium ferrous sulphate (80 g)
- Citric acid (20 g)
- n-Dodecylamine acetate (10 mL)
- Ferric nitrate (30 g)
- Maleic acid (25 g)
- Silver nitrate (10 g)
- Synperonic N (3 g)
- Distilled water

5.0 Procedure – Physical Developer consists of a working solution which is made from a stock detergent solution, a redox solution, a maleic acid solution and other chemicals. The distilled water used in preparing the solutions must be between 17 °C and 23 °C (or 62.6 °F and 73.4 °F). The glassware used in this technique must be cleaned thoroughly. Wipe all internal surfaces of the beakers with paper towels under cold tap water and rinse three (3) times with distilled water before use.

5.1 Chemical Preparation

5.1.1 Solution #1 – Maleic Acid

- 5.1.1.1** Place one thousand (1000) mL of distilled water into a clean two thousand (2000) mL glass beaker with a magnetic follower.

5.1.1.2 Add twenty-five (25) grams of maleic acid to the distilled water and stir to ensure the solution is thoroughly mixed. Stir until all the maleic acid is dissolved, which will produce a colorless solution.

5.1.1.3 Transfer the solution to a dark, shatter-proof container.

5.1.1.4 The maleic acid solution may be made in larger quantities and stored for future use (unused maleic acid may be stored indefinitely).

5.1.2 Solution #2 – Redox

5.1.2.1 Place one thousand (1000) mL of distilled water in a clean two thousand (2000) mL glass beaker with a magnetic follower.

5.1.2.2 Weigh the following chemicals and add them to the distilled water, in the order listed, while stirring. Each must fully dissolve before adding the next.

- Ferric nitrate (30 g)
- Ammonium ferrous sulfate (80 g)
- Citric acid (20 g)

After all contents have dissolved in solution, stir for an additional five (5) minutes.

5.1.2.3 Transfer the solution to a dark, shatter-proof container.

5.1.2.4 The Redox solution may be made in larger quantities and stored for future use (unused Redox solution may be stored indefinitely).

5.1.3 Solution #3 – Stock Detergent

5.1.3.1 Place one thousand (1000) mL of distilled water in a clean two thousand (2000) mL glass beaker with a magnetic follower.

5.1.3.2 Add four (4) grams of n-Dodecylamine acetate to the distilled water while stirring.

5.1.3.3 Add four (4) mL of Synperonic N to the solution and continue to stir for at least thirty (30) minutes. A nearly colorless stock solution will be produced.

5.1.3.4 Transfer the solution to a dark, shatter-proof container.

5.1.3.5 The Stock Detergent solution must not be used until the solution is at least twenty-four (24) hours old, ensuring that all solid matter has been dissolved. The Stock Detergent solution may be made in larger quantities and stored for future use (unused Stock Detergent solution may be stored indefinitely).

5.1.4 Solution #4 – Silver Nitrate

5.1.4.1 Place five hundred (500) mL of distilled water in a clean one thousand (1000) mL glass beaker with a magnetic follower.

- 5.1.4.2 Add one hundred (100) grams of silver nitrate to the distilled water while stirring. Stir for approximately ten (10) minutes or until all crystals are dissolved.
- 5.1.4.3 Transfer the solution to a dark, shatterproof container.
- 5.1.4.4 Silver nitrate solutions may be stored for up to one (1) year. The solutions must be stored in a dark shatterproof container away from direct sunlight.

5.1.5 Working Solution

- 5.1.5.1 The working solution may be mixed and stored in a dark shatter-proof container at room temperature for weeks. It is suggested that the working solution be mixed as needed. White sediment may appear but will not affect performance of the solution.
- 5.1.5.2 The following solutions must be mixed in the order listed.
- 5.1.5.3 Place one thousand (1000) mL of Solution # 2 (Redox) in a large clean glass beaker with a magnetic follower.
- 5.1.5.4 Add forty (40) mL of Solution #3 (Stock Detergent) and fifty (50) mL of Solution #4 (Silver Nitrate) to the solution with continuous stirring.
- 5.1.5.5 Stir for an additional three (3) to five (5) minutes.

5.2 Processing Procedures

- 5.2.1 Forensic Scientists shall produce a self-made test print to be processed concurrently with items of evidence (see Section Technical Procedure for Ensuring Quality Control).
- 5.2.2 When processing items of evidence, four (4) glass trays will be needed to complete the procedure. The distilled water tray may be used for the initial and final step. The distilled water must be replaced if any heavy contamination occurs while processing numerous items.
- 5.2.3 Forceps without serrated edges shall be used to handle or transfer item(s) from tray to tray.
- 5.2.4 Care must be taken to avoid any unnecessary creasing or rough edges on the item(s) as this may cause unwanted deposits of silver.
- 5.2.5 Place enough of each of the following solutions in the appropriate glass tray to completely submerge the item of evidence.
- 5.2.6 **Tray #1 – Distilled Water**
 - 5.2.6.1 Place the tray on an agitator and agitate the tray during this step.
 - 5.2.6.2 Place the item(s) in tray #1 (distilled water) for approximately five (5) to ten (10) minutes. This will remove the previously applied chemicals and dirt which may be on the item.
- 5.2.7 **Tray #2 – Maleic Acid**

5.2.7.1 Place the tray on an agitator and agitate the tray during this step.

5.2.7.2 Place the item(s) in tray #2 (maleic acid) for approximately five (5) to ten (10) minutes. Ensure that there are no bubbles noted on the item(s) prior to continuing.

5.2.8 Tray #3 – Working Solution

5.2.8.1 Place the tray on an agitator and agitate the tray during this step.

5.2.8.2 Place the item(s) in tray #3 (Working Solution) for approximately ten (10) minutes. Inspect the item(s) periodically to prevent overdevelopment of the impressions. The amount of time necessary to process items of evidence will vary depending on the number and size of the items.

5.2.9 Tray #4 – Rinse Tray

5.2.9.1 Tap water shall be used in this tray.

5.2.9.2 Allow the item to remain in the water for approximately three (3) to five (5) minutes. This will prevent further development of the impressions and remove unnecessary solutions from the item.

5.2.10 Remove the item from the working solution and allow the item to dry completely prior to proceeding. A hot-air dryer may be used to expedite the drying process; however, a hot iron should not be used as it may destroy the impressions. The developed impressions may be more visible after the drying process is completed.

5.2.11 Low contrast impressions may be improved by re-treating the item(s) with Physical Developer starting with the working solution. In the re-treatment process, it is not necessary to use the maleic acid solution. Visible impressions shall always be photographed prior to re-treating as there is the possibility they may be destroyed or over-developed.

5.2.12 **Preservation of Developed Impressions** – Preserve the developed impressions through photography (see Photographic Equipment/Procedures) and/or by electronic recording (see Image Processing).

5.2.12.1 In some cases, the photographic contrast of developed impressions may be improved when viewed with an alternate light source. The background material may fluoresce and the developed impressions will remain dark, which will assist in photographing the impression.

5.2.12.2 Physical Developer may be followed by sodium hypochlorite (bleach solution) to lighten the background and darken the developed impression (see sodium hypochlorite procedures).

5.3 Standards and Controls – N/A

5.4 Calibration – N/A

5.5 Sampling – N/A

5.6 Calculations – N/A

5.7 Uncertainty of Measurement – N/A

6.0 Limitations

6.1 Physical Developer shall be used only after ninhydrin (and ninhydrin analogs) and zinc chloride.

6.2 The glassware used in this process shall be cleaned thoroughly.

6.3 After completion of all processes, wash beakers and trays with tap water and dry with a clean cloth or paper tissue. Stubborn stains shall be removed with a mild detergent (never use an abrasive cleaner) and rinsed with cold tap water for ten (10) minutes to remove detergent.

6.4 Long development times will indicate that the silver nitrate concentration has weakened and the solution(s) shall be discarded and new solutions mixed. If new solutions are mixed, be sure to thoroughly clean the trays and beakers prior to using the new solutions.

6.5 Solutions used in this technique shall not be reused.

6.6 Shelf Life

6.6.1 Ammonium ferrous sulphate, citric acid, n-Dodecylamine acetate, ferric nitrate, maleic acid, silver nitrate and Synperonic N - indefinite if stored properly.

6.6.2 Solution #1 (maleic acid) and Solution #2 (Redox) - indefinite.

6.6.3 Solution #3 (Stock /detergent) and Solution #4 (silver nitrate) - up to one (1) year.

6.6.4 Working solutions - two (2) weeks (it is recommended solutions be mixed when needed).

7.0 Safety

7.1 Silver nitrate and the solutions containing this chemical are corrosive and toxic and must be handled with extreme care.

7.2 Protective gloves, eyewear and clothing shall be worn. Avoid ingestion and inhalation.

7.3 The solutions will stain clothing and skin black; the stain will remain on skin for several hours after contact.

8.0 References

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9.0 Records – N/A

10.0 Attachments – N/A

Revision History		
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