

Standard Operating Procedure

NCIC STOLEN GUN QUERY SEARCHES USING FBI NICS E-CHECK

PURPOSE

This Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) provides guidance for Federal Firearm Licensees (FFLs) on how to utilize the FBI's NICS E-Check system to conduct serial number-based queries of the NCIC Stolen Gun File for firearms reported as stolen ONLY. Pursuant to the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA), these searches may be conducted **voluntarily** by FFLs when firearms are presented for sale, trade, or pawn by non-licensees. While not mandated under federal law, certain state or local jurisdictions may require such queries, particularly for pawnbrokers and second-hand dealers. This SOP is intended for educational and operational use and should not be interpreted as legal advice. FFLs are strongly encouraged to consult with legal counsel before implementing any new procedures based on this guidance.

METHODS TO ACCESS THE NCIC STOLEN GUN DATABASE

FFLs have two primary methods for accessing the NCIC Stolen Gun Query. To determine your state's available options, refer to the access map at www.fbi.gov/nics-ffl. Regardless of state, including those designated as Point of Contact (POC) states, FFLs may register for access to the FBI NICS E-Check system to use the Stolen Gun Query feature—unless otherwise restricted by applicable state law.

FBI NICS E-Check Access & Registration Instructions

To use the FBI's NICS E-Check system for Stolen Gun Queries, follow these steps:

1. If Already Registered:

Visit www.nicsezcheckfbi.gov and log in with your credentials.

2. If Not Registered:

Go to NICS E-Check Registration to complete your registration.

- If your licensed premises are located in a Point of Contact (POC) state, be sure to select the **“Stolen Gun Only”** registration option.

3. Receive Credentials:

After completing the registration, you will receive your username and password via email.

4. Log In and Access the Tool:

Log in at www.nicsezcheckfbi.gov.

- To access the **Stolen Gun Query**, click the **gear icon** on the left margin of the main page to open the **“Processes”** menu, then select **“Stolen Gun Query.”**

Running a Stolen Gun Query

Follow the steps below to conduct a Stolen Gun Query using the FBI NICS E-Check system:

1. Collect Firearm Information

Obtain the serial number from the firearm presented by the non-licensee. Additional identifiers (e.g., make, model, caliber) may also be recorded. You may request valid identification from the firearm owner or seller prior to conducting the search.

Standard Operating Procedure

NCIC STOLEN GUN QUERY SEARCHES USING FBI NICS E-CHECK

2. Log In to the NICS E-Check Portal

Go to www.nicsezcheckfbi.gov and log in with your credentials.

3. Access the Stolen Gun Query Tool

From the **Processes** menu (accessed via the gear icon on the left margin), select "**Stolen Gun Query.**"

4. Enter Firearm Details

Input the firearm's serial number without any spaces or dashes. If the serial number is longer than 20 characters, use the right-most part of the serial number. If you receive a negative result (no hit), then try the left-most characters of the serial number. Complete all other required fields as prompted. Once all information is entered, click **Submit**.

Interpreting Query Results

You will receive one of the following responses:

- **NO RECORD**

This indicates there are no entries in the NCIC Stolen Gun File that match the submitted firearm information.

- **POTENTIAL MATCH**

Do **not** take possession of the firearm. If you feel safe to do so, promptly notify local law enforcement and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

You may also receive a message similar to the following:

THIS INFORMATION IS BASED ON SEARCHING AN EXACT GUN SERIAL NUMBER.

GUN SERIAL NUMBER INFORMATION SUBMITTED RESULTED IN A POTENTIAL MATCH TO AN NCIC STOLEN GUN RECORD.

PLEASE REVIEW THE RECORD IN ITS ENTIRETY. IF THE INFORMATION APPEARS ACCURATE, YOU MAY CONTACT LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT FOR VERIFICATION AND FURTHER ASSISTANCE. BE SURE TO REVIEW THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED WITH THE "POTENTIAL MATCH" AS THE SERIAL NUMBER QUERIED MAY ACTUALLY BE USED ON DIFFERENT GUNS FROM DIFFERENT MANUFACTURERS.

Recordkeeping Guidance

There are no federal recordkeeping requirements for storing the results of a Stolen Gun Query.

However, it is strongly recommended that:

- All search results, especially any potential matches, be printed immediately;
- Copies of query responses be retained with business records; and
- Records be provided to law enforcement or the ATF upon request.

Employee Safety & Recordkeeping Guidelines

To ensure compliance and safety when handling firearms with a potential NCIC match, FFL employees must adhere to the following guidelines:

- **Do not confront or detain the customer** if a “Potential Match” result is received.
- **Do not acquire, retain, or store** any firearm identified as potentially stolen.
- **Notify law enforcement discreetly** and ensure all communications and actions are thoroughly documented.
- **If a firearm is left on the premises**, enter it into the A&D Book under the designation “Stolen Gun Hold”. This applies if a customer departs the premises, leaving the firearm behind.
- **Do not attempt to recover or confiscate** a firearm from a customer after they have left the premises.
- **Secure any left-behind firearm** until law enforcement arrives and request a receipt for the firearm at the time of surrender.
- **If the firearm is acquired**, it must be disposed of as “Stolen Gun Surrender” to the appropriate law enforcement agency. Ensure the agency name and address are recorded and obtain a case or incident number and receipt for the firearm when surrendered.

Optional Reporting

- While not mandated, **FFLs are strongly encouraged to promptly notify both the ATF and local law enforcement** if a firearm receives a “Potential Match” response, particularly when the firearm is present on-site.

Legal Warning

FFLs are not required—and are legally discouraged—from holding firearms identified as potentially stolen. Retaining such a firearm could place the FFL in violation of federal law under **18 U.S.C. § 922(j)**, which states:

“It shall be unlawful for any person to receive, possess, conceal, store, barter, sell, or dispose of any stolen firearm or stolen ammunition... knowing or having reasonable cause to believe that the firearm or ammunition was stolen.”



Standard Operating Procedure

NCIC STOLEN GUN QUERY SEARCHES USING FBI NICS E-CHECK

State Access Summary

FFLs should refer to the access method applicable in their state when conducting a Stolen Gun Query. Access options are categorized as follows:

1. NICS E-Check Only

In these jurisdictions, FFLs may utilize the FBI NICS E-Check portal exclusively to conduct Stolen Gun Queries:

Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, Northern Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Texas, Virgin Islands, West Virginia, Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

2. Dual Access: NICS E-Check or State-Level System

In the following states, FFLs may either use the NICS E-Check portal or contact their respective state authority to conduct a Stolen Gun Query:

Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, and Washington.

3. State-Level Data Extract with Optional NICS E-Check

In this state, FFLs are encouraged to use a state-administered data extract tool, though the FBI NICS E-Check portal remains available:

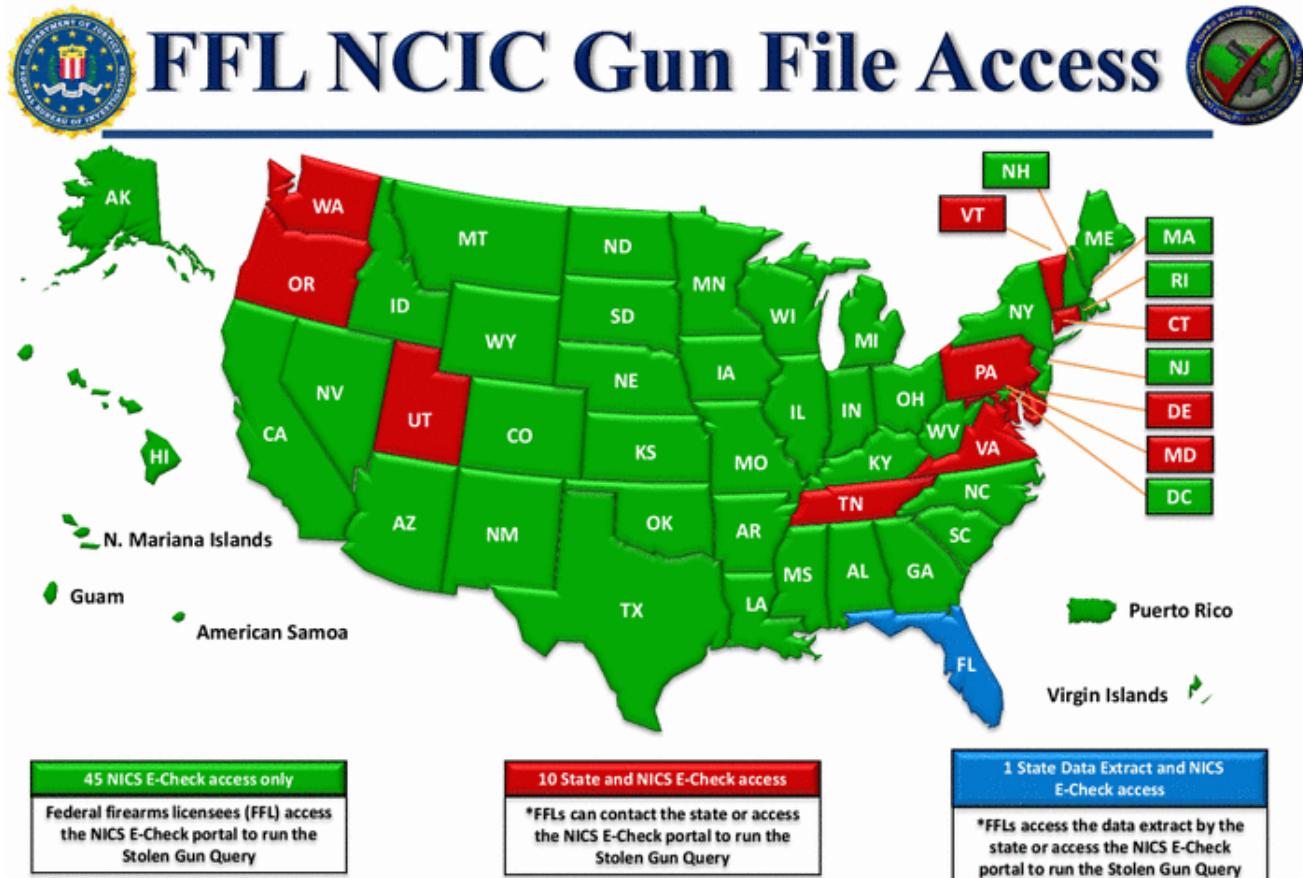
Florida

Contacts & Support

For assistance with the NICS E-Check system or Stolen Gun Query process, FFLs may use the following resources:

- **FBI NICS E-Check Portal**
www.nicsezcheckfbi.gov
- **NICS Business Relations Team**
Phone: 844-265-6716
- **Email Support**
nicsliaison@fbi.gov
- **FFL Support and Access Information**
www.fbi.gov/nics-ffl

Reference:



*While NICS E-Check is available to all FFLs, some states may additionally require use of a state administered process.

7/29/2025

Quick Reference Checklist for FFL Employees

Step 1: Collect Firearm Information

Ensure the following firearm details are obtained from the non-licensee:

- Serial Number (from frame or receiver)
- Make and Model
- Caliber
- Gun Type (e.g., Handgun, Rifle, Shotgun)
- Optional – collect customer information for law enforcement reporting, if necessary, prior to the query being initiated. The person presenting the used gun to you may be reluctant to provide their information later if the firearm is determined to be a “potential match” for a stolen firearm.

Step 2: Submit Stolen Gun Query

Use the FBI NICS E-Check portal to run the query:

- Go to www.nicsezcheckfbi.gov and log in.
- Select “**Stolen Gun Query**” from the transaction menu.
- Enter firearm data (no spaces or dashes in the serial number).
- Submit the query.
- Review the result: “**NO RECORD**” or “**POTENTIAL MATCH**.”

Step 3: If Result Is “POTENTIAL MATCH”

Take the following precautions:

- **Do NOT** take possession of the firearm.
- **Do NOT** confront the customer.
- Notify the store manager immediately.
- Contact local law enforcement discreetly.
- If the firearm is left behind, secure it and log it in the A&D Book as “*Stolen Gun Hold*.”
- Request a receipt from law enforcement upon surrender of the firearm.

Step 4: Recordkeeping (Recommended)

While not required by federal law, best practices include:

- Logging the date and time of the query.
- Printing and retaining results, especially any “Potential Match” responses.
- Including initials of the employee who performed the query.
- Keeping a copy of all communications with law enforcement.

For Questions or Immediate Support

Contact: JB or JC 24/7 Assistance Line: (720) 336-0028