
I. LOGGING PROPERTY & EVIDENCE

It is the policy of the Police Department to log into the property system all property/evidence as soon after seizure as possible. Property is not to be secured in personal lockers, files or desks.

Note: Maintaining property/evidence in a case file **may** be acceptable *under certain circumstances*; however, the property/evidence **must** first be logged into the property system and then signed out. *There shall be no exceptions to this rule.*

A. Marking and Packaging

1. All property that is collected or seized shall be marked for identification and packaged to avoid contamination and to ensure the integrity of the evidence.
2. Permanent and distinctive marks such as initials, ID numbers, and case numbers should be marked directly on objects collected, if possible, without damaging the evidence.
3. When unable to mark the exhibit itself, such as in the case of stains, hair, blood, controlled substances, etc., place the item in a vial, envelope, container or other suitable package, then seal and mark the container.
4. There are a variety of containers and materials that can be used to package physical evidence and other property. Officers should strive to use the appropriate size and type of material of the container for the type of property logged. An assortment of packaging materials and supplies for this purpose will be maintained near the property processing counter outside of the property room. It is the responsibility of the Property Officer to maintain an adequate amount of supplies for this purpose.
 - a. Always use new, clean containers to prevent contamination.
 - b. Plastic envelopes are suitable for small, dry objects.
WARNING: DO NOT PLACE DAMP OR BIOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN PLASTIC BAGS.
 - c. Paper envelopes are suitable for folded paper bindles containing small powdery material if all corners are sealed. Do not use paper envelopes for fiber evidence....a vial or pill box is preferred.

-
- d. Garments and large exhibits can generally be placed in paper bags, cardboard boxes, or wrapped in paper.
 - e. Standard sized plastic envelopes or customized plastic packaging can be made using the heat sealing device located near the evidence processing counter outside of the property room.
 - f. Larger items such as safes, vehicle bumpers, etc, that require further forensic processing can be wrapped in plastic or paper, as appropriate, and secured with tape.
 - g. Paint cans, heavy mil quality plastic bags or other suitable containers are used to store arson evidence and hazardous materials samples (Officers should check with the Fire Department Fire Marshall and /or Arson Investigators for specifics).
 - h. Refer to the Fire Department's guidelines for the appropriate container to store hazardous materials samples.
 - i. Plastic tubes or sharps boxes/containers are used to store hypodermic syringes or other sharp objects.

WARNING: DO NOT USE PAPER OR PLASTIC BAGS TO PACKAGE ANY SHARP WEAPON OR OBJECT.

- 5. Do not over-seal a package or container. Avoid or limit the use of staples. Never staple a plastic bag containing fine particles of material.
- 6. Keep items of evidence separate if cross-contamination is a factor. Every item secured from different locations should be packaged separately.
- 7. Property that requires evidence processing should be clearly marked and be accompanied by the appropriate evidence processing form(s).
- 8. FIREARMS, MONEY AND CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES must always be packaged separately from other items of evidence or property.

B. Special Handling

Different types of property require special handling and/or packaging to ensure the safety of property personnel and the integrity of the evidence.

1. Physiological Specimens

All department members will adhere to reasonable precautions in the handling of physiological specimens or items contaminated with physiological fluids, even when dried, to avoid contaminating themselves or others with infectious agents.

a. Blood Stains

Studies of blood stains are frequently important in a wide variety of criminal investigations. In some cases, particularly homicide cases, crime scene examinations by a trained Field Evidence Technician may be required to potentially establish direction or origin of blood spatters, show movement of individuals, establish a sequence of deposit of the stains, and to develop other necessary information.

b. Fresh Moist Stains

1. Do not heat stained material or place in bright sunlight to dry. Hang clothing and similar articles in a designated drying room or locker.

*Caution: If not **completely** dried before packaging, decomposition will occur which may prevent complete testing.*

2. When the stain is dry, label the item, roll it in paper or place in a paper bag or box, seal and label the container. **DO NOT PLACE STAINED OBJECTS INTO PLASTIC BAGS.**

c. Dried Stains

1. On cloth items: label the article, roll in paper or place in a paper bag or box, seal and label the container. Do not attempt to remove the stain from the cloth.
2. On small solid objects: roll in paper or place in a paper bag or box, seal and label the container, then send the entire stained object to the laboratory.

-
3. On large, solid objects: if practical, send the whole object to the laboratory. Any areas containing dry stains may be covered with paper and the edges sealed down with tape to prevent loss or contamination.

If impractical to deliver the whole object to the laboratory, scrape the stain onto a clean piece of paper which can be folded into a bundle and placed into an envelope. Scrape blood from the object using a clean knife or similar instrument. Wash and dry the instrument before each stain is scraped off so no cross-contamination with traces of blood will occur. Seal and mark the container.

- (iv) Do not mix separate dried stains. Place each stain in a separate container.
- (v) If the stain cannot be removed in any other manner, use a piece of clean gauze dampened with distilled water to absorb the stain. Make a similar swab of an unstained area. Dry the gauze pads or swabs, place in separate envelopes, seal and mark the container.

b. Semen Stains

Semen is the male reproductive fluid. It normally contains spermatozoa, which are reproductive cells, as well as other substances. It is possible to identify dried semen by either chemical tests or with the use of a "black light".

- (i) Seminal stains are often, but not always, found on clothing, blankets, sheets or other materials in rape and other sex offenses. When they dry they may have a stiff, starchy feel and can often be located by the sense of touch.
- (ii) In sexual assault cases, the victim should always be examined by a physician and a specimen taken. The laboratory can examine such specimens for seminal fluid. Oral,

vaginal or anal specimens can be submitted as smear, swabs or aspirates. A timely collection of these specimens is essential since bacterial action rapidly destroys the sperm cells. Refer to the Sexual Assault Kits guidelines for collection and storage instructions.

- (iii) Submit all suspected stained materials to the laboratory. If possible, always include the panties, underwear and other clothing from the victim. All garments should be packaged separately. Packages containing the victim's clothing should always be kept separate from those containing the suspect's clothing.
- (iv) Label all garments or other items submitted.
- (v) If damp, do not heat stained material or place in bright sunlight to dry. Hang clothing and similar articles in a designated drying room or locker.

*Caution: If not **completely** dried before packaging, decomposition will occur which may prevent complete testing.*

- (vi) When the stain is dry, label the item, roll it in paper or place in a paper bag or box, seal and label the container. **DO NOT PLACE STAINED OBJECTS INTO PLASTIC BAGS.**
- (vii) Under special circumstances, seminal stains may be suitable for DNA analysis, ABO or other blood group testing and classification.

c. Hair

Although hair is a frequently encountered type of evidence, its value for suspect/victim identification is limited. It may be able to provide (1) the race of the owner and, (2) evidence establishing if the hair fell out naturally, was pulled, cut or crushed.

- (i) If hair is firmly attached, such as in dry blood or caught in metal or glass, leave it in place and do not attempt to remove it. If the object is small, mark and seal it in an envelope. If the object is large, cover the area containing

the hair and apply a protective layer of paper to prevent loss or contamination of the hairs during transport.

- (ii) Recover *all* hair present. Place the hairs in a vial or paper envelope with sealed corners. Do not mix samples recovered at different locations. Label and seal the container. Never use gummed tape to pick up hairs and do not wash or clean them.

d. Sexual Assault Kits

Medical personnel will utilize the sexual assault kit and shall follow the provisions of 13823.11 PC regarding the examination, treatment, preservation and disposition of evidence. The investigating officer is responsible for the chain of custody of the kit and shall log it into evidence after receiving it from the medical facility.

Preservation and disposition of physical evidence shall conform to the following procedures:

- (i) If blood or other biological fluids are taken, they must be refrigerated or frozen as appropriate.
- (ii) All swabs and slides shall be air dried prior to packaging.
- (iii) All items of evidence, including laboratory specimens, shall be clearly labeled as to the source and identity of the collecting person.

e. Blood and Urine

- (i) Blood and urine samples are collected, labeled and placed in a sealed envelope by a technician and/or the investigating officer.
- (ii) All whole blood and urine samples shall be placed into the temporary storage refrigerator.

2. Fibers and Thread Evidence

Clothing, rugs, blankets, curtains and other articles of fabric may contain fiber or thread material that can potentially be valuable evidence that may be overlooked.

- a. Complete threads or long fibers can frequently be collected with the fingers or tweezers. They should be packaged in plastic envelopes, glass or plastic vials. Do not place loose fibers directly into mailing envelopes or other paper containers since they are difficult to locate in the laboratory and the paper itself may contain fibers.
- b. If the fibers are short, few in number or firmly adhering to an item, attempt to remove the complete item containing the fiber evidence and place it in a plastic envelope. The fibers may be more readily located and removed from such items by the laboratory.
- c. Avoid picking up fibers on gummed tape unless no other method for recovery of the evidence is available.
- d. Whenever thread or fiber evidence is recovered, submit to the laboratory for comparison purposes *all clothing* of persons from whom the evidence might have originated. Extreme care must be taken to keep all articles of clothing and other objects separate. Each garment should be packaged separately in paper bags.
- e. Fabric impressions which may contain embedded fibers are occasionally found in a variety of cases. If the area containing the impression cannot be conveniently submitted to the lab, a photograph should be taken of the area.

3. Paint

Paint is a common type of physical evidence encountered and can prove to have significant evidentiary value.

- a. Keep all samples collected in separate containers.
- b. If the sample is very small or difficult to remove, the complete item should be sent to the laboratory.

-
- c. If the complete item is not sent to the laboratory, always scrape or otherwise remove samples of all layers of paint or other material present.
 - d. Paint samples or scrapings should be packaged in small glass vials or plastic bags; however, they may also be placed on sheets of white paper, folded, then sealed to prevent loss.

4. Glass

Windows or other items made of glass which are broken can frequently provide valuable evidence.

- a. Shoes, clothing and other items which may contain glass fragments should be marked and packaged separately to avoid cross-contamination.
- b. Place small glass fragments in envelopes or pill boxes, seal and mark the container.
- c. Larger pieces of glass can be wrapped in tissue or other type of paper, then placed in bags or boxes to prevent breakage or other damage to corners.

5. Soil

The comparison of soil or dried mud samples has the potential to be of value in some criminal investigations.

- a. Firmly Attached Soil Samples
 - (i) If the soil is firmly attached (such as mud on a shoe), do not attempt to remove it. If practical, place the item in a bag or other appropriate container, mark and completely seal the container so no loss of the specimen can occur.
- b. Loose Soil on Clothing
 - (i) If the soil is loose, shake it all out onto a clean piece of paper. Then, fold the paper to enclose the dried soil and place in a plastic envelope or other container which can be sealed completely.
- c. Soil on Other Objects

- (i) When recovering loose soil or mud from the street or building, pick up and place the dried sample in a plastic bag, jar, box or other appropriate container, seal and mark. When possible, the sample should not include other obvious contaminating material.

d. Prevent Contamination

- (i) Care must be taken to prevent contamination or loss of samples during collection and transportation. Always place samples in sealed plastic or glass containers, if possible. Avoid using paper envelopes as they can leak. If boxes are used, line them with clean paper and seal the box.

e. Damp Soil

- (i) Always dry out damp soil specimens or moist objects containing soil or mud prior to packaging (use the evidence drying room).

6. Tool Marks

Tool marks may be encountered in a variety of crime scenes. The evidence consists of abrasions or impressions created by a tool against an object at the crime scene. These impressions will conform to identifying marks on various types of tools found in the possession of the suspect.

a. Preservation and Packaging of Tools

- (i) All areas on recovered tools which contain transferred paint, building materials or other contamination should be wrapped in plastic so that such substances will not be lost. After marking, tools should be packaged to prevent the prying blades or cutting edges from contacting any other surface or object. Care should be taken that no tape is placed on the mark or questioned area of the tool when packaging.

b. Make No Tests with Tools

-
- (i) Attempts *should never* be made to fit tools into questioned marks or to make test marks prior to laboratory examination.

c. Preservation of Tool Marks

- (i) Whenever possible, collect and submit the entire object containing tool marks to the laboratory rather than just removing the area containing the mark.
- (ii) If it is impossible to collect and submit the whole object to the laboratory, remove the tool mark itself. In such cases care should be taken to prevent any damage or alteration of the questioned mark. Always cut off sufficient surrounding material so that no damage will occur. A photograph showing the original location of the mark and its relation to its surroundings should accompany any removed mark.
- (iv) Mark the object containing the tool marks in some area where the questioned impression or abrasion will not be damaged.
- (v) Package the object containing the tool marks so that no alterations or damage will occur during collection or transportation.

7. Firearms Evidence

Firearms are involved, collected and retained in a significant number of criminal and non-criminal cases. Due to the very nature of these items, *extreme care must be taken to ensure the safe handling of the weapon and preservation of its evidentiary value.*

a. Firearms

- (i) **NEVER PLACE A LOADED FIREARM INTO AN EVIDENCE STORAGE LOCKER.**

Exception: If the weapon cannot be unloaded due to a mechanical defect (jammed) or the investigating officer is unaware of how to unload it.

*In this event, the officer **shall** attach a warning note to the weapon indicating the weapon is loaded.*

*The Property Officer **shall** then make arrangements to have the weapon unloaded (via department rangemaster, armorer or other qualified personnel) prior to placing the weapon into storage or transporting it to the laboratory.*

- (ii) Unfired cartridges may be left in the magazine provided the magazine is removed from the gun. Weapons should be unloaded ONLY after noting the position of the safety, bolt, breechblock, hammer, cylinder, magazine, etc.

- (iii) Magazine-fed weapons:

DO NOT touch the sides of the magazine as this may destroy latent prints. DO NOT unload the weapon by working the ammunition through the slide assembly.

- (iv) Revolvers:

Note the position of the loaded chambers, empty chambers, chambers containing fired casings, and chambers containing unfired cartridges with the primers having been struck by the firing pin.

- (v) NEVER pick up a weapon by placing a pencil or other object into the end of the barrel.
- (vi) NEVER attempt to test fire a firearm before it is examined, and then only at an approved range by qualified personnel.
- (vii) NEVER clean the bore, chamber or cylinder before submitting a firearm into evidence.
- (viii) If blood or other material of interest is present on the muzzle of the gun, place a small paper bag over the muzzle and seal it

to the barrel with tape to prevent loss of the sample.

- (ix) If a firearm needs to be processed for further evidence, it should be placed in a box, large paper bag(s) or manila envelope.
- (x) The firearm shall be marked for identification after fingerprint examination; however, weapons SHALL NOT be defaced by such markings.
- (xi) All firearms in the custody of the Police Department should be handled with care so as not to damage the stock, metal surfaces, or the operating mechanisms.
- (xii) Firearms shall be tagged and logged into evidence separate from all other evidence (magazines, ammunition, holsters, etc.).

b. Ammunition

- (i) Ammunition MUST be unloaded from the firearm before it is logged into evidence.
- (ii) Unfired ammunition may be marked on the side of the cartridge case, nearest the bullet.

c. Bullets

- (i) Mark the bullet on the base or nose. NEVER mark a bullet on or near the rifling markings on the sides. If the bullet is too small to mark, seal it in a container and mark the outside of that container.
- (ii) DO NOT attempt to clean recovered bullets before sending them to the laboratory, except in the case of bullets removed from a body. The latter may be washed off with running water and dried by blotting with a soft, dry towel.
- (iii) Handle fired evidence bullets as little as possible to prevent damage to the ID characteristics in the rifling markings or loss

of material adhering to the bullets. NEVER use forceps or other tools to handle bullets.

- (iv) Wrap each bullet separately in tissue or other paper to prevent damage to the rifling markings by contact with other evidence.
- (v) Package wrapped bullets in envelopes, pill boxes or other appropriate containers, label and seal.

d. Cartridge Casings

- (i) Mark cartridge casings on the inside of the open end, if possible. Cases may be marked on the outside near the open end, but care must be taken not to damage ejector marks or other markings that may be present. NEVER mark on or near the primer end of the casing. When in doubt, seal the cartridge in a marked container.

e. Gunshot Residue (GSR Kits)

Primer residue (Barium and Antimony) is often left on the hands of individuals who shoot firearms. This trace evidence can provide valuable insight and direct evidence establishing if a person has recently fired a weapon.

- (i) Gunshot Residue (GSR) Kits are pre-packaged and stored at various locations in the station. Instructions and materials for the testing are enclosed in the kit.
- (ii) Protect the hands of the individual to be tested as soon as possible by bagging them.
- (iii) Officers must also wear protective gloves (provided) while administering the test so the area swabbed / dabbed will not be contaminated.
- (iv) Complete the GSR evidence envelope, seal and enter into evidence.

8. Dangerous Weapons (Knives, Clubs, Stun Guns, etc.)

- a. NEVER submit a charged Taser, Stun Gun or other type of electronic weapon or device that could accidentally be activated or discharged. Remove or disconnect the battery(s) from the unit prior to entering into evidence.
- b. ALWAYS package sharp objects in a "Sharps" container to avoid injury to the person handling the item. If the item is too large to place into a standard container, cardboard, paper, styrofoam or

other suitable material should be wrapped around the cutting edge or point.

9. Controlled Substances

Special precautions must be taken when handling known and unknown substances believed to be narcotics. All presumptive tests should be conducted outdoors or, when indoors, under a fumigating hood with the fan activated. All employees are encouraged to wear protective gloves or use forceps when handling all suspected drugs.

- a. Items for examination should be packaged and marked separately.
- b. Needles should ALWAYS be capped and placed with the needle facing down in a plastic tube to prevent accidental injury to persons handling the item.
- c. Officers submitting suspected controlled substances are responsible for examining, field testing, weighing, packaging and requesting laboratory analysis.
 - (i) To avoid molding, fresh plant material (such as Marijuana) should not be packaged in plastic bags. It should be packaged in paper bags or in an envelope after it is air-dried.
- d. When seizure of a clandestine laboratory is planned, the ATF and the Fire Department Hazardous Materials Unit should be consulted as to the proper handling, method of collection and other safety precautions.

10. Hazardous Materials/ Devices

- a. **NEVER** transport or store in or about the Police facility any unexploded (or suspected unexploded) device.

NEVER transport or store in or about the Police facility any Class A explosive such as dynamite,

desensitized nitroglycerin, large quantities of fireworks or more than one pound of black powder.

- (i) Contact the Bay County Bomb Squad or local military EOD unit to examine, dismantle, transport or dispose of any explosive device or quantity of explosive material.
- b. All hazardous materials, after being packaged in the appropriate container, shall be transported to and placed into the Hazardous Materials Storage Locker located at the rear of the police facility. The Property Officer will collect it at a later time and store it in an appropriate storage locker.
- c. All evidence recovered from an exploded device should be photographed as found prior to removal, collected and packaged in separate containers, marked and stored in the Hazardous Materials Storage Locker.
- d. All flammable liquids from an unused fire bomb (or after it has burned out) must be sealed in a metal container then stored in the Hazardous Materials Storage Locker.
- e. When flammable liquids are collected, they must be secured in containers to eliminate the risk of fire or explosion. Only small quantities of fluids will be retained as evidence (no more than 2 oz.).
 - (i) Samples of volatile fluids found in open jars or cans should be poured into clean metal or glass containers, then completely sealed to prevent any loss or contamination of the sample.
 - (ii) The Fire Department will respond to all arson scenes and assist with expertise and equipment for the appropriate collection, packaging and storage of flammable liquids and other relevant evidence.
- f. Contact the Fire Department Hazardous Materials Unit prior to collecting, transporting and/or storing any acids and corrosives needed as evidence. They

shall be packaged in the appropriate container and placed into the Hazardous Materials Storage Locker.

- g. All fireworks will be transported to and stored in the Hazardous Materials Storage Locker.

11. Money

All monies collected and logged into the property locker shall be itemized by denomination and quantity using the approved money form.

12. Jewelry

- a. Package jewelry items individually in an envelope, box, bag, or other suitable container as appropriate.
- b. Officers submitting large quantities of expensive jewelry or gemstones should notify the Property Officer requesting that additional security measures be taken such as storage in the Department's safe.

13. Photographs

The Investigating Officer's first step in the investigation of any major crime is to photograph completely and accurately all aspects of the scene before any items of evidence are removed or disturbed.

- a. All photographs and negatives, except booking prints and outside agency requests, are handled as evidence.
- b. Officers submitting developed photographs (including photo line-ups) will be entered into evidence using appropriate procedures and guidelines as established.
- c. Undeveloped rolls of film most often contain several different cases. These photos are usually taken by a supervisor. When complete, these rolls of film (and the corresponding photo log) shall be deposited into the film depository drop slot located outside the property room.

Note: Officers need not complete a

Property Report when depositing undeveloped rolls of film. If photos are needed for court, the Property Officer will complete this documentation after the film is developed. Developed photos will then be returned to the requesting officer or photographer for their review (If booked into evidence Property Report will then be required).

14. Bicycles

- a. All bicycles, or portions thereof, that are retained by the Police Department will be transported to and placed into the bicycle locker annex of the property room.
 - (i) Different levels of security for the storage of bicycles may be utilized dependent on the property classification of the bicycle (Evidence vs Found Property).

15. Motor Vehicles

- a. Motor vehicles **SHALL NOT** be logged into evidence or stored in the bicycle locker or any other portion of the police facility. Motor vehicles requiring retention shall be transported and stored in the Department's vehicle storage lot.

Note: Vehicles may be temporarily stored at the police facility for short durations to facilitate vehicle examination and/or evidence processing.

- b. Motor vehicles retained as evidence requiring long-term storage such as homicides, fatal traffic accidents or serious hit and runs :
- c.
 - (i) The keys shall be left in the ignition of the vehicle if unlocked, placed into evidence or given directly to the Property Officer.

16. License Plates

License plates are the property of the Department of Motor Vehicles from the state of jurisdiction. The public is permitted to use the license plate when the annual fees have been paid.

-
- a. License plates that are EVIDENCE of a criminal offense or otherwise retained for the purposes of prosecution shall be logged into evidence per established procedures.
 - b. FOUND PROPERTY license plates may immediately returned to the owner or logged into the property room. The Property Officer is responsible for returning the plates to the DMV.
- 1) Alcohol
- a. Open containers of alcohol shall not be logged into the property room. The contents should be poured out at the scene, in an appropriate manner, by the investigating officer who will then describe the condition of the container and its contents in the police report.
 - b. Avoid booking into evidence large quantities of alcoholic beverages. In rare situations when a sample of the evidence is necessary for prosecution, retain one unopened container (bottle, can, etc.), photograph, and destroy the remainder.