



BEST PRACTICES FOR EVIDENCE PACKAGING

PURPOSE

- ▶ To preserve integrity of the evidence.
- ▶ To prevent contamination of the evidence.
- ▶ To prevent degradation of the evidence.
- ▶ To prevent loss of evidence.
- ▶ To preserve the chain of custody for the evidence.

- ▶ If it's important enough to be collected at the scene, it's important enough to be properly packaged and maintained.

- ▶ Anything that is used to help establish probable cause in an investigation is considered evidence and needs to be packaged.
 - ▶ 10 print cards, CD's

PACKAGE CONTAINERS

- ▶ Paper Bags

 - Paper tube for larger items

- ▶ Plastic Bags

 - Heat sealed plastic bags

- ▶ Electrostatic Dissipation Bags

 - Phones, pad, SD cards, CDs

- ▶ Plastic/Metal Jars

- ▶ Metal Cans

- ▶ Plastic tubes (syringes, sharps)

- ▶ Envelopes (manila, white)

- ▶ Boxes

 - Gun

 - Knife

 - Cardboard

WHICH PACKAGING SHOULD I USE?

- ▶ When packaging evidence it's important to remember what makes it evidence and how best to preserve it's value.
 - ▶ Latent Prints
 - ▶ DNA
 - ▶ Serology
- ▶ The evidence will dictate what you should use.
 - ▶ Circular saw in a paper bag is not a good idea.
- ▶ Use packaging appropriate for the size of the evidence.
 - ▶ Large plastic bag for cigarette butt is not a good idea.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR WET EVIDENCE

- ▶ Wet evidence needs to dry.
- ▶ Wet evidence in plastic produces mold that degrades or destroys the evidence.
- ▶ Paper is best as items can dry in paper.
- ▶ Clothing or large items should be allowed to dry. If they are folded upon themselves in a bag they may not thoroughly dry or mold could develop.
- ▶ If hanging, place paper on the floor underneath. After drying collect the paper as trace evidence may have fallen during the drying process.

LABELING AND MARKING PACKAGING

- ▶ If using an evidence bag, complete as much information as available.
- ▶ Evidence labels affixed to the packaging will suffice.
- ▶ At a minimum packaging should have:
 - ▶ Case number
 - ▶ Item, tag or evidence number
 - ▶ Date and time evidence collected
 - ▶ Brief description of what is inside packaging
 - ▶ *Legible writing preferred*

PACKAGING GUIDELINES

- ▶ ONE ITEM OF EVIDENCE PER PACKAGE

- ▶ One item being “X” number of bags of heroin.

- ▶ Do not put multiple items gathered from different locations in one package.

- ▶ CROSS CONTAMINATION

- ▶ DEGRADATION/DESTRUCTION OF EVIDENCE

TOXICOLOGY EVIDENCE: DUI Blood Kits

- ▶ Deliver to the VFL as soon as possible.
 - ▶ Examples of kits that were 6-8 weeks, the blood turned green.
- ▶ Keep refrigerated until ready to transport to the VFL.
- ▶ Best methods of delivery to the lab are hand carried or certified mail.
- ▶ Avoid after hours Friday/weekends as kits will be out of refrigeration until Monday.
- ▶ If an evidentiary blood kit is hand delivered or sent certified mail to the VFL, a 305 submission form IS NOT REQUIRED.
- ▶ If an evidentiary blood kit is placed in a storage locker at the VFL, a 305 submission form IS REQUIRED.

FIREARMS EVIDENCE

- ▶ ALWAYS UNLOADED
- ▶ If you cannot ascertain whether or not a firearm is unloaded you **MUST** make an appointment with the Firearms section of the lab **PRIOR** to bringing the firearm.
- ▶ There is a “how to” for unloading black powder firearms.
- ▶ Secure items to the bottom of the box.
 - ▶ Nothing should be rolling around loose.
- ▶ Action open if possible.
- ▶ Everything in the box included on 305.
 - ▶ Ammunition
 - ▶ Fired components (bullets, cartridge cases, shotshells)
- ▶ If blood/tissue was present on firearm, mark as BIOHAZARD.

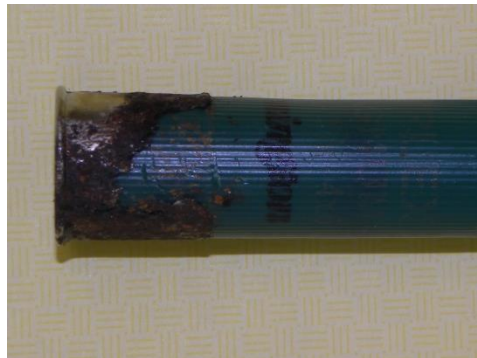
FIREARMS EVIDENCE

- ▶ Muzzle direction indicated on outside of box
 - ▶ Ammunition is separated
 - ▶ Action is open
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- ▶ Firearm is secure
 - ▶ Cylinder is open



FIREARMS EVIDENCE

- ▶ If there is blood on a firearm that requires analysis, please swab the blood and wash the rest off of the firearm/fired ammunition components.
- ▶ Blood is **CORROSIVE** and will impede function testing and identifications.



FIREARMS EVIDENCE - AMMUNITION

- ▶ Use paper envelopes.
- ▶ Swab blood if necessary, but wash off blood/tissue prior to submission.
- ▶ Please do not submit boxes of ammunition unless you have a specific request - test fires are created using lab purchased ammunition.

FIREARMS EVIDENCE - CLOTHING

- ▶ GSR particles are transient and easily transferred.
- ▶ Package in paper, especially if wet with blood, water, etc.
- ▶ Neatly fold clothing to protect stains, insert sheets of paper between folds to collect particles that may fall off clothing.
- ▶ In many cases please be aware that medical staff's first priority is not evidence collection, therefore it's the responsibility of the investigating officer to properly collect evidence.

TOOLMARK EVIDENCE

- ▶ Use packaging of appropriate size.
 - ▶ Gun boxes, etc.
- ▶ Do not wrap tool surfaces, an appropriate sized box will be sufficient.
- ▶ Do not clean tools prior to submission.
- ▶ If during collection the item is cut to collect an evidence tool mark, mark the side that was cut during collection.
 - ▶ Tape, marker, paint, some type of indication and note what was used in the comments section
- ▶ Fracture Match specimens should also be labeled as to which side is evidence and which was cut during collection.

FIREARMS & 305 Form

- ▶ Several different codes for Firearms.
- ▶ Select the appropriate code for the type of examination that is requested for the submitted evidence:
 - ▶ FM: Fracture Match
 - ▶ FT: Firearm Function Test
 - ▶ FC: Firearm Comparison (includes fired ammunition components to be searched against the GRC file)
 - ▶ TM: Toolmark Comparison
 - ▶ SN: Serial Number Restoration
 - ▶ DD: Distance Determination

HOW TO IDENTIFY FIREARMS FOR QUERIES AND PROPERTY PISTOL



FIREARM DESCRIPTION			
MANUFACTURER	TYPE	MODEL	CALIBER
Glock	Pistol	19	9mm
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN Austria		IMPORTER Glock, Inc. Smyrna, Georgia	
OTHER MARKINGS OR INFORMATION Ex., proof marks, obliterated serial number, etc.			

LATENTS EVIDENCE

- ▶ If you are submitting latent print evidence to the VFL, you will need to obtain and submit elimination prints from the victim or anyone else (not a suspect) who would have had access to the evidence.
- ▶ If there are known suspects, elimination prints still need to be obtained and submitted. Protocol at the lab is to compare elimination prints prior to comparing to suspect prints.
- ▶ If you have a suspect with a State ID number contact VCIC and obtain the 10 print card. Then submit this card to the VFL for comparison.

LATENTS EVIDENCE

- ▶ **LATENT LIFT CARD**
 - ▶ Date, time, lift number, case number
 - ▶ Directionality of the print (which way is up)
 - ▶ Sketch showing the location of the lift on the object it was lifted from.
- ▶ **UNPROCESSED EVIDENCE**
 - ▶ Package so the latent prints will not come into contact with the packaging.
 - ▶ Degradation/Destruction
 - ▶ This packaging usually requires extra work and ingenuity.
 - ▶ **NEVER USE PLASTIC BAGS FOR UNPROCESSED LATENT EVIDENCE.**
- ▶ Do not place more than one item per package due to risk of degradation/destruction.

LATENTS EVIDENCE

- ▶ CDs and 10 Print Cards
 - ▶ These are evidence and need to be packaged as such.
 - ▶ Plastic is good for 10 print cards as it allows for visualization through the packaging.
 - ▶ CDs are better in an envelope to diminish the possibility of electrostatic degradation of the contents stored on the CD.

DNA EVIDENCE

- ▶ Swabs (buccal and cotton) need to dry thoroughly prior to sealing in packaging.
- ▶ Package in paper or envelopes.
- ▶ Obtain elimination standards from victim at time of submission of evidence to be examined.
- ▶ Obtain standards from suspects through consent or NTO.
- ▶ If wet, place in paper and bring to the lab as soon as practical if you do not have evidence drying cabinets.

SEROLOGY EVIDENCE

- ▶ Serology section at the VFL analyzes blood, seminal fluid, and saliva..
- ▶ Serology section needs to locate the bodily fluids on the evidence prior to the DNA section being able to examine the evidence for DNA.
- ▶ SANE kits
 - ▶ Should be sent to the VFL within 72 hours of receipt.
 - ▶ All kits should be sent to the lab (even anonymous kits).

DRUG EVIDENCE

- ▶ Package in plastic if dry.
- ▶ Package in paper if wet.
- ▶ Cultivations: cut 6 inches off the top of each plant and package individually in paper bags.

SEALING EVIDENCE

- ▶ Use Evidence Tape.
- ▶ Tape openings and areas that may provide opportunity for contamination or loss of evidence (holes in gun boxes, improperly closed plastic/paper evidence bags, incomplete heat seals).
- ▶ Date and Initial EACH SEAL.
 - ▶ When doing this, initials and date should be written half on the package and half on the evidence tape.
 - ▶ Date and initial across the heat seal.
- ▶ Remember Biohazard stickers if evidence contains biological material.

CHAIN OF CUSTODY

- ▶ It is preferred to hand transfer evidence for the strongest chain of custody.
- ▶ Evidence can also be submitted by:
 - ▶ Certified Mail
 - ▶ USPS (Registered, First Class, Priority)
 - ▶ Fed Ex
 - ▶ UPS
 - ▶ Use tracking services as it is a way of maintaining a chain of custody while the evidence is in transit to the VFL.

VFL ADDRESS

▶ MAILING ADDRESS

- ▶ P.O. Box 47
- ▶ Waterbury, VT 05676

▶ PHYSICAL ADDRESS

- ▶ 45 State Dr.
- ▶ Waterbury, VT 05671-1300

QUESTIONS AND CONTACTS

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